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**Chinese Theological Review:21**



edited by Janice Wickeri

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## CHINESE THEOLOGICAL REVIEW 21

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## From the Editor

This issue of the *Chinese Theological Review* features articles from the recently held 8th Joint National Conference of the Standing Committees of the China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (hereafter CCC/TSPM) which met in Beijing in January, 2008. Since its first issue in 1985, the *Chinese Theological Review* has published translations of most of the important speeches, statements etc., from the National Christian Conferences, beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> session (*CTR*: 1986). This provides a convenient way for readers to trace developments in the Chinese Church through these important years

Delegates from across China came together for the conference, which is convened every five years. A new CCC/TSPM leadership was also elected, with 16 national leaders heading an 84 member Joint Standing Committee. Continuing recent trends, the average age of the 16 new leaders at top levels in the CCC/TSPM is 50. Both committees have representation from Christians all across the China mainland; a total of 181 representatives were elected to the new conference.

The Rev. Gao Feng is the new President of the CCC. Rev. Gao was born in 1962, holds an M.Th. and is a Ph.D. candidate. He serves as Chair and President of the Shandong Provincial CCC/

TSPM and as Principal of Shandong Provincial Seminary. He is a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and of the Standing Committee of the Shandong People's Political Consultative Conference. He is a past Vice-President of the CCC.

The newly-elected Chairperson of the TSPM is Elder Fu Xianwei, born in 1944 in Shanghai. Elder Fu is a university graduate, a graduate of the Pastor's Course at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, and an ordained elder. He is the Chair of the Shanghai TSPM and a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. He has also been Associate General Secretary of the national TSPM.

Names of other members and officers of the two Standing Committees, as well as those of the Advisory Committee can be found on pages 34-36 of this issue. Further details on the all the leadership can be found on the Amity News Service website [www.amitynewsservice.org](http://www.amitynewsservice.org).

This issue of the *Chinese Theological Review* contains the "Work Report," "Church Order" and other documents and speeches from the Conference.

A major document adopted this year is the "Church Order of Protestant Churches in China," (p. 37) which has undergone substantial revisions from its introduction at the 5<sup>th</sup> National Conference in 1991 (translation in *CTR*: 1991) as the order for trial use and its adoption at the 6<sup>th</sup> National Conference in 1996 (*CTR*: 12). The Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie, outgoing President of the CCC, has written a commentary on the revision process which appears in *Tian Feng* (No. 3, March, 2008). She describes the new "Church Order" as having greater clarity and organization than earlier versions. Issues surrounding church management of property and finances as well as the need for an organized and elected group of representatives from among the congregation, which also functions to give more Christians an opportunity for service in the

church, are set out in greater detail.

She also draws attention to the ongoing emphasis on strengthening the institutional structure of the church and the greater clarity in regulations as a response to both increased government and public awareness of the positive role of religion in the public and social life of the nation and efforts on both sides to “bring religion into legal channels.” The latter refers to the civic and patriotic duties of religion on the one hand, and the recourse to the law in pursuit of the lawful rights and interests of religious believers and groups on the other. The theme of the positive role of religion appears again and again in the contents of this issue and more will be said of this below.

A noteworthy addition to this revised order is Chapter Two, “Faith.” Since the introduction of unified worship in the late 1950s and the post-denominational approach to inherited differences in matters of faith and liturgical practice has been characterized as “seeking the common ground while reserving differences,” and “mutual respect in matters of faith.” Thus, as Cao observes, the chapter on faith in the revised order does not attempt an exhaustive definition, but emphasizes tenets of basic and common faith.

She notes that this chapter was discussed at a meeting which included discussions with professors from Nanjing Seminary and representatives from provincial, autonomous region and municipality level Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations nationwide. Staff also held some 200 consultations to hear the views of Christians from a variety of faith backgrounds. The extended discussion of the meaning and nature of faith given in this chapter also serves, she writes, to counteract some misunderstandings of the Chinese Church overseas, such as “the church in China believes in Three-Self, not in Christ,” or “the Chinese Church denies that Christ is the Head of the Church.”

An abridged translation or summary of Cao’s commentary on the “Church Order” will appear in a future issue of *Amity News Service*.



The major theme of the “Work Report” from the Conference, also presented by Rev. Cao, is neatly summarized in its title, “Run the Church Well according to Run the Church Well according to the Three-Self Principle; Play an Active Role in Building a Harmonious Society.” The discussion of the achievements of the previous CCC/TSPM session and of the existing issues and challenges which lie ahead for the new session are set in this framework. The government’s policy emphasis on building a “harmonious society” was broached at the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and further elucidated at the most recent 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress held in October, 2007, which emphasized “building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.” In 2001, the government’s National Religious Work Conference and “Regulations on Religious Work” further emphasized doing a good job of overseeing and managing relations with religions and religious believers, stressing understanding and the use of legal channels.

The CCC/TSPM work report mentions institutional and ecclesial strengthening of the church and its adoption of the “Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian Clergy” as responses from the church side to the positive signals from official government bodies. (p. 16) In addition, Chinese President Hu Jintao gave an important speech at a Collective Study Session of the Politburo in which he emphasized the positive role for religions in achieving the national goals of a harmonious and well off society. Christians, then, have a positive role to play in nation building, which is a “new expectation in society,” and something that had “not existed in the past.” (p. 16)

Theological reconstruction is part of this role: “building the harmonious society is becoming an important part of reflection on theological construction,” (p. 10) and “an awareness that Christians bear a social duty continues to strengthen; rules and regulations of the church have improved and young and middle-aged colleagues are moving into leadership positions.” (p. 17)

The higher social profile of Christianity and of the Protestant churches is further reflected in the speech given at the Conference by Mr. Qiu Zhonghui, General Secretary of The Amity Foundation. Amity, one of the oldest charitable organizations (founded 1985) and NGOs in China, has always had as its goal making the Christian presence more widely known.

Qiu, too, sees the emphasis on the harmonious society as providing greater space for Christianity to become an accepted part of society and something which dovetails with Amity's own goals and vision: "Amity's social service work has brought us to the personal understanding that endeavors of compassion are an indispensable component of building a harmonious society." (p. 61)

Other items from the conference include greetings from Bishop K.H. Ting, as well as a proposal and a resolution that reflect the church's response to its role and responsibilities in the larger society

Also in this issue, Mr. Chen Yongtao offers a theological consideration of Christian values which could be said to lie at the heart of a Christian concept of harmony, though his discussion is concerned with an even more basic matter of Christian faith, the concept of salvation. In the spirit of theological reconstruction, he explores what he feels are outdated and over-Westernized views of salvation held by many Chinese Christians, views which often make it difficult for non-Christians in China to accept the faith. "We must make a new interpretation of ... theological ideas that are out of sync with our present society. ... in our present context, it is extremely important to bring some new understandings to bear on the nature of salvation." (p. 90-91)

He goes on to introduce the view of salvation as reconciliation and restoration of relationship: between human beings and God; among persons; with creation. This is a relational approach, stem-

ming from the relational nature of our triune God. Because Chinese society values relationship and integration, Chen feels that this is a gospel message that can be heard and accepted by more Chinese people.

The final three articles are taken from the opening ceremonies of a church-sponsored conference: “The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church,” held in 2007 under the sponsorship of the TSPM/CCC, to mark the 200th anniversary of Morrison’s arrival in China, as well as to recall both the contributions and shortcomings of the Western missionary movement and the long road to selfhood for Christianity in China which resulted. The themes of a positive and more active role for Christianity and the continuing importance of the three-self principle and independence of the Chinese Church are stressed in the opening remarks by Mr. Wang Zuo’an, Deputy Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Presbyterian Ji Jianhong, outgoing chair of the TSPM brings his greetings and encouragement to conference participants. Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie’s longer paper considers the strengths and weaknesses of the missionary movement in China, the damage and challenges it brought to the cause of Christianity there and the prospects as Christians take up their role in building the harmonious society.

I am grateful to the authors of these essays. Any errors in representing their work are entirely my own. Thanks are due Philip Wickeri for consulting on the contents of volume 21, and for his editorial assistance. I would also like to thank the Rev. Kan Baoping, new General Secretary of the CCC, for providing materials from the recent National Christian Conference for translation.

The various levels of church bodies and offices are referred to as CCC or TSPM with appropriate regional modifiers (local/

regional, etc.) or (at the national level) CCC/TSPM. Biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV, unless another version has been used in an original English piece. Personal names are given in the Chinese manner, family name first, except for persons who commonly use another form, such as Y.T. Wu, K.H. Ting or Wenzao Han.

I would also thank Dr. H.S. Wilson, executive director, and the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, publishers of the Chinese Theological Review, and all those responsible for producing this issue at the KACES Campus in Balmatta, Mangalore, India.

Janice Wickeri  
San Anselmo

## **Our Contribution to a Harmonious Society: Promoting Church Harmony**

K.H. TING

My dear delegates,

The opening today of the Eighth National Chinese Christian Conference in Beijing is an occasion of great happiness for me. I received your invitation prior to the meeting. I had originally planned to come, but due to the cold weather and my own advancing years, many friends felt it would be best if I did not attend. I “obeyed,” because I am a well-behaved senior citizen.

The work of the CCC/TSPM in recent years has been solid and highly effective. There has been much progress in several areas: advancing theological reconstruction, strengthening the church institutionally, initiating social service organizations. We have increased friendly contacts with church circles all over the world, our friendships continue to grow, and our position in the Church ecumenical becomes more significant.

The environment for Christianity in China today is greatly improved. The 17<sup>th</sup> Chinese Communist Party Congress has been held. At the recent Collective Study Session of the Politburo, Comrade Hu Jintao gave an important speech on religious issues, providing significant direction for doing religious work well in the new stage of this new century. He also made a new request for those in religious circles. We Chinese Christians must show concern for the

national situation, give our attention to study and keep up with the times, so that we can play a positive role in economic and social development.

The Bible teaches that Church is the home of the eternal God. But the visible church on earth has a concrete organization and a leadership whose job is to run the church. The two organizations — CCC/TSPM — form a body to unite and lead Christians in loving the country and loving the church. The church is a social group, part of our great social family. Thus, in promoting internal church harmony and in serving the building of a harmonious society, the national leadership of the CCC and TSPM is extremely important. A new leadership is being elected at this national conference and I hope our new leadership team will be young and promising, full of vigor and vitality.

### **1 Unite and cooperate with one heart and mind**

We serve in the house of God and so we must be of one heart and mind. We must all join hands and participate in the work of God's house. Matters at hand should be brought under common discussion; difficulties should be borne in common; issues should be raised in consultation; and responsibilities should be taken up together. Co-workers should all look after each other, aid each other, and run the church well together with sincerity and tolerance. From time immemorial, the Chinese people have valued harmony; Christianity advocates reconciliation between God and humankind, reconciliation among people, reconciliation between human beings and nature: we must strive to build a harmonious church and to build a harmonious society together with our fellow citizens.

### **2 Treat one another with love; get along in harmony**

The primary intention of Christianity is universal love. We brothers and sisters must all love one another. If we neglect the love of Christ, the church will have no life. "If everyone gives a little

love, the world will be a better place,” in the words of the popular song. If each one of us Christians gives a little love, the church will surely be more harmonious, and society, too, will be more harmonious.

### **3 Love the country and love the church; glorify God and benefit people**

For as long as I have been engaged in church work, the goal has been to love the country and love the church. Why do we still bring up love country and love church? Because there is still a relatively large number of co-workers and fellow believers within Christianity who harbor misunderstandings, who think that since they believe in the Lord, they no longer have a motherland. What a great distortion of Christian faith this is. Our principle of three-self patriotism is already deeply lodged in people’s hearts. But there are still some brothers and sisters who have contradictions in their hearts: their conscience is uneasy with either patriotism or lack of it. Actually, many prophets and servants of God were extremely patriotic and such examples are recorded in the pages of the Bible. You can read about them there. Here I simply want to emphasize that love for country and love for church are not contradictory; the two are not in opposition. For the church does not exist in a vacuum, but here on earth. The church is a social group that exists in a specific, real country. The church’s existence and development is closely bound up with the nation’s weal and woe. In recent years, the country has invested a great deal of financial and material resources to help those of us in religious circles to achieve unprecedented accomplishments. For example, a new headquarters has been arranged for the CCC/TSPM and a new campus built for Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. Local churches and home worship gatherings have been assisted with buildings and land use. History has shown that Christianity must be one with the people of the nation, joining in the construction of our country. Only when

the country is powerful and our people well off will there be space and conditions for our church to develop. It stands to reason that we Christians love the country and love the church. I have said many times that a Christian should be a good citizen. If we cannot be good citizens, are we worthy to be called good Christians?

To sum up, I hope our pastoral workers strive to enhance their quality, to uphold the three-self principle and run the Chinese church well, in order to make our rightful contribution to the harmonious society!

I wish this conference every success!

Bp. Ting's written remarks were read to the delegates at the Eighth National Chinese Christian Conference, January 9, 2008.



# **Run the Church Well According to the Three-Self Principle; Play an Active Role in Building a Harmonious Society**

## **Work Report of the Seventh NCCC**

PRESENTED BY CAO SHENGJIE

I have been requested by the Seventh Standing Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China and the Fifth Standing Committee of the China Christian Council to present this Work Report for the consideration of delegates to this Eighth National Christian Conference.

We have gathered here today in our nation's capital, co-workers and fellow believers from across the nation, every heart filled with joy and gratitude. The Communist Party of China concluded its 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress [Oct. 15-21, 2007 –ed.]. General Secretary Hu Jintao's report, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects," delivered at this crucial moment in the development of reform and opening, scientifically answered the fundamental political questions for the Party and nation in terms of overall development: what banner do we hold high; what road do we follow; what kind of development

goals do we pursue and in what spirit? The report stated that we will soon be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the policy of reform and opening up. The fundamental reason behind all our achievements and progress since the reform and opening up policy was introduced is that we have blazed a path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The great mass of Christians entirely supports this report, especially the statement that “We will fully implement the Party’s basic principle for its work related to religious affairs and bring into play the positive role of religious personages and believers in promoting economic and social development.”

The world today is undergoing extensive and profound changes, and contemporary China is going through a wide-ranging and profound transformation. We are faced with a complex and fluid international environment and the arduous tasks of reform and development. But, under the leadership of the Party Central with Hu Jintao as General Secretary: we have won complete victory over SARS; our space craft Shenzhou 5 and Shenzhou 6 have fulfilled the Chinese people’s dreams of space, and lunar probe Chang’e No. 1 has been successful; there have been further improvements in socialist democratic politics; rural transformation has been spurred by the building of new socialist villages; and the goal of working to build an all-round moderately prosperous society has been raised by the implementation of the eleventh five-year plan. The Communist Party of China, guided by Deng Xiaoping Thought and the important theory of the Three Represents, has taken the thorough application of the scientific outlook on development as the task of Party and state. Starting from the overall situation of a new period in a new century, it has proposed important strategic thinking—the idea of a socialist harmonious society. This idea has received enthusiastic response and support from the masses of the people, Chinese Christians among them.

With the accomplishment of socialist religious theory and the establishment of religious rule of law, a new and unprecedented

situation has come about in religious work. The promulgation of the “Regulations on Religious Work,” brought religious affairs work into the channel of legalized administration and management. At the impetus of the National Religious Work Conference, religious policy was implemented in a more thorough and comprehensive way. The Party and the government helped religious circles in practical ways with their work, exemplifying Party and government emphasis on religious work. The construction of the new headquarters of the national CCC/TSPM and the new campus of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary brought about a vast improvement in working conditions for the national bodies and for the teaching work of the Seminary. During the construction period, CPPCC Chairperson Jia Qinglin and other central government leaders made personal inspection visits, bringing warm greetings to the nation’s Christians.

With the support of our co-workers and fellow Christians from Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations throughout China, we have had rather good success in our work. We wish to bring greetings to colleagues and Christians throughout the country and to express our very heartfelt gratitude to leaders at all levels and people from all social groups for their great support and help. At this point, we wish to remember especially those who have gone to be with the Lord: the director of the advisory committee of this CCC/TSPM, former president of the China Christian Council, our colleague Wenzao Han; deputy directors of the advisory committee, Liu Nianfen and Shi Zesheng; members of the advisory committee Yang Zhouhuai, Sun Yuehan and Xu Changtai. We remember their efforts on our behalf: by the fruits of their labors shall they be known.

My fellow delegates, we give thanks to God for the achievements of the past five and more years and are filled with hope for the wonderful future of our Chinese Church. Let us be filled with confidence that with the Holy Spirit to guide us we may strive to run the church even better in the future.

## Achievements of this Session

Based on the guidelines for our work proposed at the Seventh National Chinese Christian Conference, the CCC/TSPM actively strove to lead and assist churches throughout the country in theological reconstruction, in self-construction within the CCC/TSPM, in exchanges with overseas churches and in social service.

### (1) *New Efforts*

Patriotism is the foundation of the three-self principle. Patriotism requires observance of the law. The CCC/TSPM calls on all Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations to make a conscientious study of the provisions of the “Regulations on Religious Work,” and to raise consciousness of law-abiding patriotism. To strengthen patriotic education in our seminaries and Bible schools, the CCC/TSPM has prepared *A Course in Christian Patriotism*, which has been welcomed by staff and students at seminaries and Bible schools and has received a favorable assessment. In August, 2007, the CCC/TSPM held a meeting, “Experiences in Teaching from *A Course in Christian Patriotism* at Chinese Protestant Seminaries and Bible Schools,” in Shenyang. Following the meeting it was planned to produce *A Course in Christian Patriotism: Teacher’s Guide*.

The materials for research into the Three-Self Patriotic Movement have been enriched by the publication of several titles which have become important documents with guiding significance for running the church well according to the three-self principle. *Remembering the Past as a Lesson for the Future*, edited by Luo Guanzong, director of the CCC/TSPM advisory committee, is a factual history of the manipulation of Christianity by imperialism in its aggression against China; *Selected Writings on the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement* (Vol. 2) is a compilation of documents on the development of contemporary Chinese Christianity. 2007 was the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Prot-

estant Christianity in China. In order to further reflect on the impact of the missionary movement on Chinese Christianity and sum up the lessons of the historical experience, the CCC/TSPM held a symposium in Shanghai, in November, 2006, “The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church,” at which scholars from both church and non-church circles, as well as some pastoral workers were present. The conference produced a book of papers, *The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church*, which has had an impact both in China and abroad.

The Chinese Church upholds the three-self principle and independence, based on both the lessons of history and the needs of the times. The Chinese Church must uphold its independent selfhood; church authority must be in the hands of those with a mind to love the country and love the church. Only such a church can withstand manipulation by hostile outside forces. Christianity should spread a gospel of peace. The means of evangelism must not be at odds with its content. Christianity must strive hard to bring about theological reconstruction and to play an active role in promoting the harmonious society. The future of Chinese Christianity lies in developing its “selfhood,” and in following its own path, rooting itself in Chinese soil while being nurtured by the benefit of good experiences from churches of every nation, and building a Chinese Church suitable to the developments in Chinese society, which can contribute to the ecumenical church.

## ***(2) Theological Reconstruction Opens up a New Situation***

Initiated by Bishop K.H. Ting and vigorously promoted by the CCC/TSPM, this session of the CCC/TSPM established a writing team to publish the “Theological Reconstruction Series,” and published the fruits of discussions on theological reconstruction in the form of sermon prompts, as *Rivers of Living Water*. CCC/TSPM also held numerous conferences on promoting theological reconstruction for personnel in provincial, autonomous re-

gion and municipal Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations, as well as from seminaries and Bible schools.

A wave of discussions on theological education, mainly with the participation of pastoral workers and seminary and Bible school staff and students, but including also some lay workers and ordinary Christians, appeared throughout the churches. Most provincial, autonomous region and municipal Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations have collected the fruits of these discussions into publications. Some places have been able to draw beneficial conclusions from their experience, such as organizing teams to speak on theological reconstruction; using the fruits of these discussions on theological reconstruction as the basis for sermon content; setting up writing teams in various local churches; making theological reconstruction part of the coursework at seminaries and Bible schools, etc. In some places, new forms are being used to exchange ideas from the theological reconstruction seminars. In the eastern part of the country, a seminar and exchange was held among six provinces and a municipality; in the northeast, seminars and exchanges on theological reconstruction were held among three provinces, four municipalities and a seminary.

Building the harmonious society is becoming an important part of reflection on theological reconstruction. CCC/TSPM has held theological reconstruction seminars for five provinces and autonomous regions in the south and for five provinces and autonomous regions in the north; at both these seminars “reconciliation, harmony and peace” was a major theme.

Through the promotion of theological education, many co-workers have realized that with no change in basic faith as a precondition, theology must adapt to its social, cultural, and ethnic context. Beginning with the fact that love is God’s basic attribute, we must deal rightly with belief and unbelief and with those Christians whose faith differs from our own, establish a correct view of the Bible, and realize that God’s revelation is gradually revealed

and that humans' knowledge of God also comes about gradually. We must begin to develop social services, for this is also working for the Lord. Reconciliation is a theme that runs throughout the Bible and thus we Christians must play an active role in building the harmonious society.

At present, theological reconstruction has born specific fruits: increasingly, believers are pious but not fanatic in their faith; reasoned, not extreme; the CCC/TSPM and its local counterparts have published new collections and treatises on theological education; there has been a happy transformation in sermon content, with increased concern for the environment, world peace and a focus on people themselves; sentiment in favor of Christian service to construction of the nation and enthusiasm for public works has strengthened.

### ***(3) New Progress in the Self-Construction of CCC/TSPM***

Following the 2001 National Conference on Religious Work, the Party and government made great efforts to improve conditions for religious groups to carry on their work and to improve conditions for religious educational institutions. The CCC/TSPM moved into its new headquarters, where working conditions have undergone a vast improvement; the new campus of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary has begun to take shape. At the same time, some provincial, autonomous region and municipality Christian Councils and Three-self Organizations, seminaries, Bible schools and lay training centers have also seen definite improvement in their working conditions.

Strengthening self-construction of Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations throughout the country has always been a foundational for running the church well according to the three-self principle. In response to the "Regulations on Religious Work," the CCC/TSPM has drafted its corresponding "Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian Clergy," to provide a systematic credentialing

criteria for church workers. Following widespread canvassing of views, the “Church Order of Protestant Churches in China” has gone through a process of substantial revision. The foregoing actions enabled the CCC/TSPM to supplement and improve its process of institution-building. Local churches have also done much new exploration in terms of rules and regulations and some have established social security systems and retirement plans for church workers at the grass roots; some have filled positions in the churches through the appointment system of the CCC/TSPM.

To strengthen its own construction, the CCC/TSPM has adjusted the structure of its departments, establishing the Social Service Department, Lay Training Department and the Overseas Relations Department, as well as closing the Nanjing Branch Office of the CCC/TSPM. To enhance its strength, this conference has brought on board co-workers from various locales; to improve staff morale, job descriptions and grades have been implemented for staff in the CCC/TSPM, standardizing and reaffirming each system. Along with this, local Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations have brought younger people into leadership positions as terms end..

#### ***(4) New Breakthroughs in Overseas Relations***

New thinking has taken shape in the CCC/TSPM. In Hong Kong in August, 2004; in Los Angeles, Atlanta and New York in April-May, 2006; and in Cologne and Bavaria in June, 2007; the Chinese Bible Exhibition, titled “A lamp to my feet, a light to my path,” was held with great success, drawing huge interest from local organizations, church groups and Christians. Many people came to understand the development and present reality of the Chinese Church through the exhibition. Various media reported following the exhibition the fact that from 1981 to 2006, China printed and distributed 43 million Bibles. As Bishop K.H. Ting has said, “The Bible unites us,” and the Bible Exhibition advanced



relations and dialogue between the Chinese Church and churches overseas and did much to counteract the impact of false reports about the Chinese Church overseas, publicizing the truth about religious freedom in China, and making new friends.

During the past five and more years, there have been continued breakthroughs in contact between the CCC/TSPM and churches overseas. China has hosted world Christian leaders and visitors, including the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, and the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, as well as 270 Christian groups: an average of 659 persons annually for a total of 3,296 persons. In recent years, the Chinese Church has attended international conferences, making friends widely, and has visited churches in Europe, the U.S., Asia, Hong Kong and Macao. It has begun to have increased contacts with leaders and church organizations in the nations of Africa as well. Statistically, for Christian delegations, this amounts to 127 groups and individuals involving 521 persons visiting over 20 regions and countries. We emphasize introducing the development of the Chinese Church in light of God's favor, winning our guests' respect and praise. Some overseas Christians and organizations, which had been bias against China due to a lack of understanding, are gradually changing their views. The new breakthroughs in our overseas relations have weakened the impact of overseas forces hostile to China.

### ***(5) New Frontiers in Social Welfare***

Christians emphasize the personal spiritual life. At the same time, they must value service to society. The crux for opening up social service is to change viewpoints for the better. Social service work is specific action by Christians who love their country as well as an expression in practice of their Christian faith.

In order to better promote social service work in the local churches, the Social Service Department of the CCC/TSPM has

held many training courses and classes in the theory and specialization of social service to provide a platform where local churches can share their experiences in initiating social service work. For more than five years, in addition to projects to combat SARS and provide disaster relief, new areas in social service work have continued to open up. Preliminary statistics show that local churches have opened 410 homes for the elderly, some of which have projects for home help and “retirement at home” programs; dozens of clinics have been opened by grass roots churches, some using the mobile rural clinic; rebuilding aid has been given to Tibet, Shaanxi, Jiangxi, and Hebei; thousands of school-less children and handicapped university students have been helped to return to school; HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness training has been held in Henan, Hunan, Jiangxi, etc., and 100 AIDS orphans have received assistance; over 7000 wheelchairs have been donated in thirteen provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities; living and education expenses have been given to orphans in church-run orphanages; and three treatment centers for autistic children have received aid. All these efforts have been well-received by society.

In addition to launching its social service ministry, the CCC/TSPM also assists groups in need within the church. It has supported the construction of seminaries and lay training centers, and has assisted in building or rebuilding churches in poor areas and ethnic minority areas in the southwest and northwest; provided supplementary financial assistance to seminary graduates and evangelists in need; provided free Bibles to Christians in poor areas, etc.

Up to the present, the CCC/TSPM has raised 35.65 million *yuan* in funding among Christians in China and abroad for social service projects, aiding over 700 various projects in over 20 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, which have benefited 100,000 people.

## ***(6) New Developments in Publishing and Distribution***

The publication of printed and audiovisual materials and the website have advanced in unison, creating a new atmosphere in the CCC/TSPM. In recent years, the publications department has expanded and maximized its potential, speeding up the publication process, and expanding in particular the publication of titles in the areas of spirituality and theological reconstruction. According to preliminary statistics, from 2002 to 2007, the CCC/TSPM printed 16.10 million Bibles, published 2,807,000 New Hymnals, over 4 million calendars of various types and over 5.7 million *Christian Planners*, as well as 78 new titles and 95 second editions. Establishment of audiovisual production facilities is another new move in the publication ministry of the CCC/TSPM. In the past few years, over 2 million copies of over 40 such titles have been produced. These publications have all enriched the variety of titles available from the church publications department and provided brothers and sisters with even more spiritual nourishment to choose from.

*Tian Feng* is the flagship magazine of the CCC/TSPM, striving to keep a finger on the pulse of the times, to witness to the development of the Chinese Church, guide opinion toward a deeper promotion of theological reconstruction, and actively lead Christians to serve the construction of a harmonious society. To satisfy the needs of its readers, it is constantly fine-tuning the publication; since changing to a twice-monthly schedule, the circulation has continued to climb. The improvements in *Tian Feng* have also gained notice from some Christian scholars. In January, 2003, the Chinese Christian website formally went online, the only such website to represent the CCC/TSPM on the Internet. To do so, it overcame its lack of specialized personnel and other difficulties, setting up both Chinese and English pages, and becoming an important channel to understanding Chinese Christianity for churches and Christians both in China and overseas.

To achieve success in distribution in mountainous areas and places with poor transport infrastructure, the CCC/TSPM subsidizes 40 “Bible trucks,” a move which has been praised by brothers and sisters in many churches.

In addition to these main items of ministry, the CCC/TSPM has made solid achievements in personnel training, grassroots research, and so on. In over five years, the leadership of the CCC/TSPM at Associate General-Secretary (CCC) and Associate Secretary-General (TSPM) and above, and other leading colleagues, has visited churches in 27 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities strengthening contact and communication with churches in these locales.

There have also been shortfalls in the work of this session of the CCC/TSPM. Many areas are awaiting improvement: because of insufficient attention to the various specialized committees, they have not functioned as fully as they should; insufficient care and guidance has been given to the ministry of local churches: hot topics and difficult issues have not been thoroughly investigated and studied. The various departments must further strengthen awareness of service to the church in their style of work; the level of standardization in the seminaries is insufficient: there is a lack of qualified teachers and a shortage of all sorts of talented persons. Given these shortfalls, in our future work we must strive for improvement, building on the cohesive force of a strengthened CCC/TSPM to lay down a solid foundation for running the church well according to the three-self principle.

### **Better Knowledge for a More Active Role**

The best opportunity for development lies before the Chinese Church. With regard to the external environment especially, the Party’s religious policy is continues to improve, with religious affairs management increasingly handled within legal channels. In addition there is a new expectation in society that religion will have

a positive role to play in building the harmonious society; this has not existed in the past. Speaking of Christianity itself, along with the launching of theological reconstruction, the awareness that Christians bear a social duty continues to strengthen, the rules and regulations of the church have improved and young and middle-aged colleagues are moving into positions of responsibility. These factors are enlivening the Chinese Church and enabling it to move steadily toward maturity. It is because of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement that the attitude in society toward Christianity underwent a vast change for the better. This has been the significant achievement of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in its over fifty-year history. Thus, we must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, grasp this historic opportunity, and strive to complete the epochal mission God has given us.

### ***(1) Knowing the Challenges We Face***

In this new century, Chinese society is changing rapidly. Adjustments in the economic system, social reforms, punishment for corruption and the people's concern for people's livelihood issues, etc., all affect the church. Social opportunity and challenges coexist today. In terms of society as a whole, opportunities outweigh the challenges. Bishop Ting reminds us that for Chinese Christianity, challenges may be far greater than opportunities. This is because some of our colleagues are not yet fully mentally prepared for new circumstances and new issues, and lack coping skills. We have the saying: Live in peace, but consider the possibility of danger. The reality of the Chinese Church tells us that we should even look at opportunity as a challenge. The Chinese Church faces some very serious challenges. I would like to highlight some of these:

1. Lack of personnel limits a rise in the quality of the church as a whole. There is a widespread lack of trained persons in pastoral work, research, and management. Although we have nurtured talented persons for the church through seminary training and

study abroad, and although some young and middle-aged colleagues have moved into positions of importance, by comparison with the development of the Chinese Church and the serious situation it faces, our reserve of various trained people is still precarious. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” is a situation that has been exacerbated in many areas. We should note that in some places the reason why church management is a mess, pulpit supply alarmingly inadequate, reserves are slim, and some local Church Councils and Three-Self Organizations cannot hold elections regularly — are all in some way related to the personnel issue. If this situation is not reversed, Christianity is in danger of being marginalized by society. The Chinese Church must begin within its system, not only in training personnel, but creating a good environment in the church in which talented people can reach their full potential.

2. All sorts of factors affect the cohesive strength of the CCC/TSPM. How to strengthen the unity within the CCC/TSPM is the important task before us. In recent years, there has been a growing tendency toward secularization in some Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations. For example, factions exist in some Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations, and in some cases family influences control the church; church leaders cannot implement democratic management of the church but act in an arbitrary fashion; enticed by material benefits, some co-workers in the Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations neglect spiritual cultivation, their morals slip, and unhealthy tendencies and corrupt phenomena may appear. The Chinese Church is developing, but at the same time, people with ulterior motives take advantage of the current opportunities to undertake splittist activities; some heretical groups make contact with overseas groups and bring disorder into the church, etc.

3. Infiltration by groups overseas undermines the achievements of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. At present, an in-

creasing number of people overseas are turning their attention to the Chinese Church. Some of them attempt to use Christianity as an entry point to “Westernize” or “split” China. They continually devise new plans to infiltrate China, using religion to disguise their political ideas. Their goal is to use religion to change China’s current social system and oppose our mainstream culture of socialism. The various overseas anti-China forces also use Christianity to muster their combined forces, in a so-called “countryside encircling the cities” maneuver. They plan to use the so-called “house churches” to organize a force through which they can control and influence society. In such circumstances, the independence and self-reliance of those responsible for the church in some places is diminished, and they abandon the three-self principle in favor of promised material benefits. Some cannot distinguish “Westernization” and “splittism,” yielding church sovereignty with both hands.

4. Confusion and heresy seriously affect the healthy development of the church. For grassroots and rural churches, preventing chaos and resisting heresy has always been an arduous duty. Along with the rural surplus labor force going to the cities in great numbers, the strength of pastoral work at the grassroots, especially in rural churches, has been greatly weakened. Some believers have only a vague knowledge of basic Christian faith, which intensifies the tendency toward a utilitarian, superstitious faith. In some places that lack clergy and pastoral workers, heresy is rampant and has confused some believers, posing a great danger to the healthy development of the church.

If we cannot bring these problems to a good solution, it will be difficult to realize our goal of running the church well according to the three-self principle. Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations throughout the country need to have some foresight with regard to the types of problems that may arise; and they must find measures to deal with problems that have already appeared. CCC/TSPM is a church organization. The health of a church or-

ganization directly affects whether or not the church can be run well. All Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations must realize that the purpose of three-self is running the church well and serving the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "I know my own"; "My sheep hear my voice" (Jn. 10: 14, 27). We must be good shepherds as Jesus was, caring for the needs of our flocks, providing for them spiritually and also leading them to uphold independence and self-reliance and follow the path of love for country and love for church.

## (2) *A Clear and Firm Direction*

The achievements of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement over the past fifty and more years have been great. Because of the work of the TSPM, the Chinese Church shook off the control of Western mission boards and took back its sovereignty; moved toward the "post-denominational era"; enriched its theological thinking; made huge advances in every aspect of its ministry. Because of the TSPM, the Chinese Church adapted to socialist society and gave a unique and beautiful witness to the ecumenical church. Because of the TSPM, the Chinese Church has a bright future without parallel.

In a new situation, it is extremely important to clarify the direction for running the church well. This requires that we uphold the three-self principle, love the country and love the church, and promote theological reconstruction.

1. Be unwavering in maintaining the three-self principle. The three-self principle is the foundation of the life of the Chinese Church in Chinese society, the policy and impetus for running the church well. From the first, the purpose of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was to "secure a Chinese Church led by Chinese themselves," and "point to the responsibility of all Chinese Christians for the construction of the new China." The important experience gleaned from the vigorous development of the Chinese Church lay in the



witness of the good lives of believers, fulfilling to the utmost their duty to their country and society. The purpose of Three-Self is to run the church well. Without the three-self principle, this would be impossible for the Chinese Church today.

We uphold the three-self principle in the new situation because it embodies the spirit of the times: Chinese Christianity moving with the times, in step with the nation, of one heart with the people. To uphold the three-self principle we must observe the teachings of the Bible and build a Chinese Christianity that is rich in theological thinking, filled with vitality, in line with Chinese culture, preaches the whole truth, honors ethics and morality, adapts to social development, serves the people, and exemplifies a harmonious witness. There are two important foundations of Chinese Christianity's maintenance of the three-self principle: a mind to love the country and love the church and support for theological thinking. These two foundations guarantee that Chinese Christianity develops toward the future.

2. Uphold the unity of love for country and love for church. Love for country and love for church is a prerequisite for running the church well. Love for country is a duty of all citizens. Love for church is a basic requirement for all Christians. The course of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement tells us that the two are inseparable; they complement and complete each other; only with love for country and love for church can we run the church well.

A Christian who loves the country and loves the church should be a law-abiding one. With the implementation of the "Regulations on Religious Work" and the various provisions that accompany it, religious work and religious activities have recourse to the law. Freedom of religious belief is enshrined in the Constitution and religious believers have legal guarantees for their lawful rights and interests. Churches should strengthen believers' education in abiding by the law, that they may enjoy their given rights within the framework of the Constitution, laws and regulations. They must in

no way set themselves above the law in the name of freedom of religious belief.

A Christian who loves the country and loves the church should be a good citizen. Besides observing the law, a good citizen should of his or her own accord care about the development of the nation and be clear about the relationship between rights and duties. Fulfilling the duties of a citizen is in line with biblical teachings (see Romans 13: 7). Christians should bear the duties of a citizen and social responsibilities. Only in this way can the church function as a golden lamp stand.

A Christian who loves the country and loves the church should play an active part in the development of the economy and the society. Constructing a socialist country that is strong, democratic, civilized and harmonious is in the basic interests of the people, and Christians should have a sense of responsibility in this regard, becoming an active force in social and economic development. A church that is in accordance with the will of God will not only please Christians, but will have the goodwill of all the people (see Acts 2:47). Christianity should lead believers in adapting to the best trends of the times and in making their contribution to building a modern, strong, and socialist country.

3. Be unwavering in upholding the advancement of theological reconstruction. Theological reconstruction is a deepening of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the expression of a mature Christianity adapting to a modern society. It is also a basic requirement for our church's development in the new situation; it will have a guiding function for every aspect of Christian work.

Theological reconstruction provides the guiding thought for running the church well. In the past, Chinese theology for the most part mimicked conservative Western theology; e.g., an emphasis on despair over the world, a separation between faith and reason, between spirituality and reality, a conflict between belief and unbelief, proclaiming a negative eschatology, and so on. This negative

and outmoded theology made it difficult for believers to conceive of adapting to socialist society. The initiative for theological reconstruction was meant to get rid of the shackles of negative theological thinking and open up a new situation in Chinese Christianity, one of independence and a sense of selfhood. It is an expression of Chinese Christianity's move toward reason, an essential path to adapting to socialist society, and a necessary trend in the fusion of Chinese Christianity and advanced Chinese culture.

Advancing theological reconstruction should fully bring into play Christian ethics and morality. Christian ethics and morals are God's revelation, functioning to regulate the Christian life. These ethics and morals are also part of the achievements of human civilization. This morality retains its real significance in the period of the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, not only guiding the lives of Christians, but as an ethical backing for Christian promotion of social harmony. The ultimate goal of theological reconstruction is the construction of a systematic Chinese theology which can become the theoretical foundation for running the church well according to the three-self principle.

### ***(3) Our Mission for these Times***

In the new situation, as the whole nation is contributing to building the harmonious society and striving to construct socialism with Chinese characteristics, we continue to uphold running the church well according to the three-self principle as our mission for the times. We do this in order to better proclaim the whole gospel in Chinese society, and in so doing, make the Chinese Church a church that is in line with the will of God and that has the goodwill of the people. Thus, we should work hard in the following areas:

1. Strengthen the ecclesial nature of the CCC/TSPM: In society, as a social group; in the church, as an organization of Christians themselves; both a bridge between the Party, government, and believers and an implement to serve the church directly. If we

want to run the church even better according to the three-self principle, we must strengthen the ecclesial nature of the CCC/TSPM. In the “Church Order of Protestant Churches in China,” a section on faith has been included, reflecting the consensus of what constitutes faith in the post-denominational Chinese Church. This is also an effort to strengthen the ecclesial nature of Chinese Christianity. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement’s valuable experience of more than fifty years has given us a base from which to move forward. We must make our own efforts in the area of ecclesiology, exploring church management, interpreting worship, the Eucharist and the sacraments on a basis of mutual respect, and preventing chaotic phenomena from creeping into normal church activities.

Strengthening the ecclesial nature of the CCC/TSPM helps to promote unity and strengthens cohesion; it helps resist heresy and infiltration; and it is advantageous for running the church well according to the three-self principle.

2. Unite believers to strive for the construction of the harmonious society. The unity of the leadership of the CCC/TSPM is crucial to strengthening cohesion. Unity is the basis of running the church well; only when the leadership is of one heart and mind can it unite and lead believers in building up the body of Christ. In cases where beliefs differ among Christians, unified worship must be maintained on a basis of mutual respect and the principle of seeking the common ground while reserving differences. Upholding unified worship on a basis of mutual respect means not restoring any sort of denomination, not setting up any denominational organization, nor using any denominational labels, and firmly opposing any plan by overseas denominational organizations or bodies to split the Chinese Church.

Mutual respect means having respect for the other’s particular beliefs, liturgical forms, and habits of faith. This respect is not one-sided, however; rather, respect is mutual. Seeking the common ground while reserving differences means seeking the larger

commonality on the foundation of unified worship while reserving smaller differences. Since our basic faith is one: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, we should “mak(e) every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4: 3). We should be vigilant against creeping denominationalism supported by outside forces, while reflecting on whether churches truly take the position of unified worship and attain mutual respect in practice. All our churches should abide by the “Church Order of Protestant Churches in China” and conduct themselves strictly according to its provisions.

Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations must care for those in need among Christians, alleviating their difficulties in concrete ways, including those believers who as yet have no direct links to the CCC/TSPM. The majority of believers who have no links to the CCC/TSPM, with the exception of a minority engaged in illegal and unlawful activities and those who spread heresy, do not oppose love for country and love for church or the three-self principle. We must enlarge the scope of our unity and lead the greater Christian community to build together a harmonious church.

3. Adapt to the times and contribute to the construction of the nation. Christians must adapt to the times for the sake of our own development. Paul said, “I have become all things to all people” (1Cor. 9: 22). The key to what the Three-Self Patriotic Movement has been able to achieve today lies in the fact that it is a movement that has adapted to the society of new China, transforming the image of Christianity as a “foreign religion,” and identifying with the people. In this sense, Three-Self saved Chinese Christianity and aided the Chinese Church.

Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations must strive to lead believers to actively contribute as they should to the social and economic development of the country. Christians in all walks of life should be industrious and hardworking, and adopt an attitude of praising God and benefiting others. Rural churches should

encourage their believers to work hard and get rich in their efforts to build a new countryside. They should proclaim the “love-centered” ethics and morals of Christianity, playing an active role for social harmony. Christianity has a fine tradition of initiating charitable and public welfare work, and we must encourage believers to be light and salt, to care for the widow and orphan, to strive to do good, serve society, benefit the people, and spread Jesus’ love; for the mission of the church, from first to last, is to witness to Christ.

#### ***(4) Chinese Christianity’s Role in Building the Harmonious Society***

The “Resolution on Major Issues Regarding the Building of a Harmonious Socialist Society,” which was adopted at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China [November, 2002- ed.] specifically mentioned “bringing into play the positive function of religion in promoting social harmony.” This is a great encouragement for all Christians.

Chinese Christianity’s own doctrines hold that building a harmonious society is in keeping with biblical teachings and in keeping with the propositions of Christian social ethics. Making Christianity an active agent in building the harmonious society is both the leading of God for the Chinese Church and the demand of the times for us. China is in a time of economic transition, a time during which a number of social issues has gradually surfaced. In Christianity the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (see Gal. 5: 22-23) have been developed and these virtues can play a positive role in the building of a socialist harmonious society.

China is a multi-religious nation, and Christianity should play a role in achieving religious harmony as part of the building of the harmonious society. A happy development in recent years has been the opening of dialogue between Christianity and other religions:

the Christian-Muslim dialogue in Shanghai, for example, was extremely helpful in dispelling bias and promoting mutual understanding and religious harmony. There can be harmony without sameness. All can live together: this is both the quintessence of Chinese traditional culture and something theological reconstruction should absorb.

In building the harmonious society, Christians should reflect on how they may live together in harmony with others. We must learn to appreciate truth, goodness, and beauty outside the church. There are some believers in the Chinese Church who have always had a one-sided understanding of biblical passages such as “believers may not be yoked together with unbelievers.” They cannot get along harmoniously with non-Christians. For Christianity to play a positive role in building the harmonious society, the first order of importance is to establish a harmonious theology.

A clear recognition of the role of Christianity in building the harmonious society will make our work more solid and effective. Only by becoming part of society, with Christian and non-Christian strengthening contacts and relations, advancing mutual understanding, cooperation, and unity, can the church continue to move forward and play its role of golden lamp stand.

### **Grasp Opportunities; Be Innovative**

My dear delegates, we are living in an unprecedented golden age. The Party and government highly value religious work. The 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress stressed that the basic policy of the Party’s religious work must be thoroughly implemented and the positive role of those in religious circles mobilized to advance social and economic development. At the Central Committee Political Bureau’s Second Collective Study, General Secretary Hu Jintao again stressed the basic requirement that the party should actively do a good job in religious work. He fully explained that the Party and the government affirm and encourage religious personages and re-

ligious believers to play their role in promoting economic and social development.

We must seize opportunities, liberate our thinking and move forward with the times, with a high sense of mission and responsibility, establishing the Chinese Church even better in the future, and serving society in the spirit of Christ's love to bring light to the people.

***(1) Persist in the Three-Self Principles; Strengthen Education in Patriotism***

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement is the only correct choice for Chinese Christianity. The three-self principle is a unity of loving the country and loving the church, the direction that guides the Chinese Church forward, the fundamental principle by which to run the church well. The CCC/TSPM should organize personnel to strengthen research into the three-self principle, and seminaries should do likewise, strengthening study, research, and reflection in this area.

Patriotism is the foundation of the three-self principle. The CCC/TSPM's publication *A Christian Course in Patriotism* should not only be an important course in seminaries, but should be studied and discussed in all Christian Churches, among pastoral workers and in the larger Christian community. We should also increase study and discussion of *Selected Essays on the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement* (vols. 1 and 2), *The Past is a Lesson for the Future*, and *The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church*.

***(2) Redouble our Efforts; Further Promote Theological Reconstruction***

We have been engaged in theological reconstruction for over ten years. The CCC/TSPM is to carry out a study to sum up and assess the total experience of theological reconstruction as a basis



on which to formulate an outline program.

Seminaries are the base for theological reconstruction, places where the important responsibility for theological research is borne, directed at the real issues within the Chinese Church and the challenges it faces, as well as places where research in various topics is carried on.

The CCC/TSPM must organize all Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations and pastoral workers to undertake various levels of periodic specialized training in theological reconstruction.

The promotion of theological reconstruction must be grasped in both hands. In one hand, we hold theoretical study aimed at “deepening,” to further substantiate and adjust writing teams focused in this area, and to do a good job in discussions and amass a body of theoretical research. In the other hand, we hold the effort to “popularize” theoretical results. Co-workers in the grassroots churches should be mobilized to make these results easier for ordinary people to understand, explaining the profound in simple language in sermons, guiding faith into practice for believers.

### ***(3) Strengthen the Self-Construction of the CCC/TSPM, Increase Cohesion and Expand Unity***

All Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations must improve self-management according to the law, striving to do a good job of construction in organization, thinking, and institutional structure. In personnel we must strive to firmly establish the leadership team, set up organizational mechanisms, improve performance, create a good image, practice diligence and thrift, professionalism, dedication, and enterprise. In this way we can make the CCC/TSPM truly a faultless organization, united and cooperative, managed in an orderly way, and bold in breaking new ground.

The CCC/TSPM organization must be inwardly strong in character and outwardly strong in image. It must strive to expand

its influence and cohesion among pastoral workers and lay people. We must further expand unity, especially uniting with those believers who do not as yet have direct contact with the CCC/TSPM. CCC/TSPM must strengthen its consciousness of serving believers. It must defend the lawful rights and interests of the church, and guide believers to be patriotic and law-abiding, and carry out religious activities within the framework of the laws and regulations.

#### ***(4) Improve Theological Education; Train Personnel***

Trained personnel are the basis of everything. We must train for the church a large contingent of a variety of outstanding personnel who uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, cherish their socialist homeland, are well trained in the scholarship of religion and have a good reputation both in the church and in society.

We must strive to run seminaries and Bible schools well, follow the relevant regulations, clarify pedagogical policies, support and help seminaries and Bible schools to build up teaching staff, support seminaries in preparing teaching materials, and support and assist Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in setting up its Ph.D. program.

We must further improve advanced studies and training for pastoral workers, the leadership of the CCC/TSPM and responsible co-workers, and continue to send students for study overseas in compliance with the relevant regulations.

#### ***(5) Social Service is a Contribution to the Harmonious Society***

The CCC/TSPM will continue to support and provide assistance to churches nationwide to initiate social service projects such as homes for the elderly, clinics, hospitals, treatment for autistic children, and loving concern and aid for those with disabilities.

All Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations should

guide pastoral workers and believers to have a more reform-oriented mindset, renew their thinking, follow biblical teachings, and serve people in the spirit of “all things to all people,” actively engaging in all projects for the public welfare, and opening up new realms of social service.

#### ***(6) Expand Contacts Overseas; Resist Outside Infiltration***

In the excellent conditions of reform and opening, overseas contacts have also grown daily. The Chinese Church should develop contacts and relationships with overseas churches on a basis of equality, openness, honesty, and lawfulness. On the principles of “one country two systems,” “three mutualities,” and “uphold the unity of the nation,” the church should strengthen contact with churches in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Through these contacts, we extend the bonds of friendship, introducing and making known the religious situation in China and religious policy.

The CCC/TSPM will formulate a plan for its work vis à vis overseas churches, continue regular Bible exhibitions, train personnel for overseas contacts, have regular exchanges on overseas work, and offer consultation and service for local churches in their overseas contacts.

While we encourage overseas exchanges, we must firmly resist overseas efforts to carry out various activities to infiltrate us. In their overseas exchanges all churches should strengthen their awareness of sovereignty, and follow procedures and regulations. We cannot forsake honor for profit, and must do nothing that would harm either the interests of the country or those of the Chinese Church.

#### ***(7) Promote Development in the Chinese Church, especially in Grassroots and Rural Churches***

The majority of Chinese Christians are in grassroots and rural churches and this ministry accounts for a very large proportion

of the ministry of the Chinese Church. There are many problems in grassroots and rural churches, great challenges. All Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations should pay particular attention to work in grassroots and rural churches.

We must strengthen training of evangelists in grassroots and rural churches. The CCC/TSPM must support and organize appropriate educational materials for use in training in these churches. Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations must help grassroots and rural churches improve the management of their churches and meeting points, so that management and religious activities are done in an orderly way. We must help rural believers grasp new technologies, thus increasing their profitability as well as rural churches' capacity for self-support.

We must bring the results of research in the theories of theological reconstruction rapidly into the message in grassroots and rural churches to raise the educational level and faith quality of believers, and reinforce their resistance to infiltration and their capacity to discern heresy. We must stress ethical and moral construction in rural churches and have a positive role in the construction of the new socialist countryside.

My dear delegates, we are living in great times; we have a great mission before us and serve a great enterprise. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is the century of the great revival of the Chinese people. The 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress put forward a series of new development actions. In this great historical process, the Chinese Church should daily adapt itself to China. We pray for the prosperity of the nation, for her people to live and work in peace and contentment. We care about eco-equilibrium and a peaceful society. We call for religious harmony and world peace. We respect every individual's integrity, and cherish all fruits of human civilization.

We believe that, guided by the Holy Spirit, through the efforts of our co-workers and fellow Christians, the Chinese Church

will have an even more brilliant tomorrow. Let us take up the epochal mission God has given us, adapt to the demands of development and social progress, uphold running the church well according to the three-self principle, play an active role in building the harmonious society, and contribute anew and more to China's social and economic development.

Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie is outgoing President of the China Christian Council.

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Sun Jinwei

Gong Guangming

Yu Jianrong

Wu Chengrong

Song Jishu\* (Korean)

Wang Weifan

Shen Cheng'en

Su Deci

Lu Jianming

Chen Kewei

Ji Jianhong

Lin De'en

Luo Guanzong

Zhao Zhi'en

Zhao Xuyao

Xiang Jianhua

Xu Minghan

Gao Zhongxiao

Cao Shengjie\*

Tong Yiqiang



## **Church Order of Protestant Churches in China**

(Adopted January 8, 2008, at the Joint (National) Conference of the Seventh Standing Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches in China and the Fifth Standing Committee of the China Christian Council)

### **CHAPTER ONE**

Article 1 This order has been formulated on biblical teachings, the history and traditions of the Church, and the fundamentals of the life of the church ecumenical, integrated with the realities of the Chinese Church.

Article 2 The Chinese Church functions according to the principle of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation (hereafter: three-self principle) which encompasses independence and self-management, actively engages in theological reconstruction, and guides Christians in making a contribution to the building of an harmonious society.

Article 3 Local churches differ in their backgrounds and development, and thus church affairs organizations in the various provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities may draft their own corresponding orders based on this one. However, these orders may not contradict this order, nor may they be formulated in the name of any denomination.

Article 4 The responsibilities of the China Christian Council in church matters visa à vis church affairs organizations in the vari-

ous provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities include liaison, service, guidance, and supervision.

## **CHAPTER TWO: FAITH**

Article 5 The Chinese Church takes the contents of the entire Bible, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed as the foundation of our faith, the main points of which are as follows:

Ours is a Triune God,<sup>1</sup> everlasting and eternal.

God is Spirit. God is loving, just, holy, and trustworthy. God is almighty Father, the Lord who creates and sustains the cosmos and all that is in it, who keeps and cares for the whole world.

Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, born of the Holy Spirit, the Word made flesh, wholly God and wholly human. He came into the world to save humankind, to witness to God the Father, to preach the gospel; he was crucified, died, and was buried. He rose again and ascended into heaven. He will come again to judge the world.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, who enables people to know their sinfulness and to repent, who bestows wisdom and ability and every grace, leading us to know God and to enter into the truth, enabling people to lead holy lives, and to give beautiful witness to Christ.

The church is the body of Christ and Christ is its Head. The church is apostolic, one, holy, and catholic. The visible church is called by God to be a fellowship of those who believe in Jesus Christ. It was established by the apostles as Jesus instructed them. The mission of the church is to preach the gospel, to administer the Sacraments, to teach and nurture believers, to do good works, and to bear witness to the Lord. The church is both universal and particular. The Chinese Church must build itself up in love and be one in Christ.

The Bible has been revealed by God and written down by human beings through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the highest authority in matters of faith and the standard of life for believers. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, people in different times have gained new light from the Bible. The Bible should be interpreted in accordance with the principle of rightly explaining the word of truth. It should not be interpreted arbitrarily or out of context.

Human beings are made in the image of God, but cannot become gods. God has given humanity dominion over all God's creation. Because of sin, human beings have diminished God's glory, yet through faith and the grace of Jesus Christ, human beings are redeemed and saved, and are granted resurrection and everlasting life.

Christ will come again. According to the teachings of the Bible, no one knows the day of his coming, and any method to determine when Christ will come again violates the teachings of the Bible.

A Christian's faith and works are one. Christians must live out Christ in the world, glorifying God and benefiting people.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE CHURCH**

Article 6 Differences in culture, historical experience, and social systems exist among churches throughout the world. Faith is not received in identical ways, and this may produce differences in theological knowledge and interpretation. In its fellowship with the ecumenical church, the Chinese Church is connected with the Saints of the Church in every place, as mutual limbs [of the body of Christ], in friendly contact, in mutual sharing and mutual respect. At the same time, it is an independent and self-run church, without a subordinate relation to any church beyond its borders, nor dominated by any outside church.

Article 7 The church is both a spiritual fellowship of Christians which should build up the body of Christ according to biblical teachings, and a social group, which must abide by the national Constitution, and the provisions of laws, regulations, and policies, fulfilling its duties, such as legal registration.

Article 8 Local churches, in accordance with the three-self principle, and with the guidance and support of Church Councils and Three-Self Organizations, should unite Christians in voluntary observance of this order, to carry out all aspects of their ministry well, with one heart and one mind, to support theological education, to develop social service, and to promote social harmony.

Article 9 The Chinese Church maintains a unified form of worship. At the same time it is aware that Christians differ in spiritual experience and needs. On the basis of the three-self principle, the Church seeks the common ground in matters of faith and tradition and practices mutual respect and mutual acceptance, making no distinctions or attacks. The teachings of the Bible must be observed and every effort made to preserve the unity of heart received from the Holy Spirit.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE SACRAMENTS**

Article 10 Based on the teachings of the Bible and the various traditions of the church, the Chinese Church administers two sacraments: baptism (sprinkling or immersion) and the Eucharist (also called breaking bread).

Baptism is commanded by the Lord Jesus as a sign that the one baptized has died with the Lord, been buried and has risen again. The Chinese Church recognizes the efficacy of baptism both by sprinkling and by immersion, because the Holy Spirit works in baptism, creating a new Christian person.

The Eucharist was established by our Lord Jesus himself. The bread and wine of the Eucharist are signs of Christ's body and blood. Christians receive the Eucharist in remembrance of the Lord. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist renews the relationship between the Christian and Christ, strengthens the faith and enriches the Christian's spiritual life while enhancing the unity of the fellowship.

Only baptized Christians may receive the Eucharist.

Article 11 The Eucharist may be administered by a bishop, clergy (including here and in the following, elders commensurate to clergy in various traditions), and teachers (also called associate clergy). Elders appointed by the clergy may also administer the Eucharist, but no one who does not have ministerial orders may be appointed to administer the Eucharist.

Article 12 The Eucharist must take place in a church as part of a specific liturgy and be carried out in a reverent manner.

Article 13 The church may arrange for elderly or seriously ill Christians to receive the Eucharist in their homes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CHRISTIANS**

Article 14 Those who come to church for the first time seeking the gospel truth and those who participate in church activities are called inquirers. Inquirers who have attended churches or home worship gatherings for a given period, who voluntarily accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, who repent of their sins, whose actions are upright, and who are law-abiding, may enroll in an inquirers' class and make a systematic study of biblical fundamentals and what it means to be a Christian. Those who have been exam-

ined by the pastors on faith and morals and found acceptable, may be baptized. Following baptism, inquirers may be entered in the rolls of the church and become members.

Article 15 Christians must abide by the teachings of the Bible and the rules and order of the church. They must show respect for the clergy, serve gladly, support all aspects of the church's ministry, and fulfill their responsibilities to the church.

Article 16 Christians should be good citizens. They should love the country and love the church, be law-abiding, and be in harmony in their families and with their neighbors. They should serve the society, benefit the people, and fulfill their social responsibilities.

Article 17 Christians found to have engaged in seriously inappropriate behavior, or who adhere to heretical teachings, should be educated and admonished by the clergy. The management organization of the church or home worship gathering concerned may report those who persist in such seriously inappropriate behavior to the local church affairs organization. Upon examination and confirmation of the facts, such individuals may be denied the Eucharist or, as a final measure, removed from the rolls of the church.

## **CHAPTER SIX: MINISTRY**

Article 18 Ministerial orders in current use in churches in China are: bishop, minister, teacher, and elder.

Those who have received these orders are referred to as clergy.

Gender equality applies in ministerial orders.

Evangelists (teachers, including here and below, deacons and

lay workers who have been involved in preaching) who have been approved by the local church council and clergy are called pastoral workers.

Article 19 Pastoral workers must meet the following criteria:

They must be in good physical and mental health and possess a pure Christian faith and lead a pious spiritual life witnessed by good moral character and conduct. They must have the experience of devotion to Christ and service to the church. They must love their fellow Christians and be held in high esteem among other Christians. They must be patriotic and law-abiding and enjoy a good reputation, both within the church and outside it.

They must uphold the three-self principle, unite with believers in loving the country and loving the church, and promote mutual respect in matters of faith.

Article 20 Those seeking Holy Orders must meet the following criteria:

Bishops must have a B.Th.<sup>2</sup> or above, be over 40 years of age, have served as pastors for over ten years, be profoundly versed in theology, be active in promoting theological reconstruction, have authored instructional theses or works, have rich pastoral experience, the ability to unite coworkers and believers, a lofty moral character, and be deeply loved and respected by believers.

Ministers should have formal theological education as well as experience in pastoral work. Graduates with a B.Th. (4 years) or higher, should have at least two years of pastoral work experience. Those with a diploma in theology from a regional seminary or a Bible school education (2-4 years) must have at least three years of pastoral work experience.

Teachers should have formal theological education as well as experience in pastoral work. Those with a B.Th. (4 years) should

have at least one year of pastoral experience. Those with a diploma in theology from a regional seminary or a Bible school education (2-4 years) should have at least three years experience in pastoral work. Those who have served as teachers for a year or more are eligible to apply for ordination.

Elders should be high school graduates with five or more years experience in church service. Preaching elders should have some theological education, or one or more years of lay training approved by the provincial, autonomous region or municipal Christian Council and Three-Self Organization.

Article 21 The duties of the various ministerial orders differ:

A bishop's responsibilities lie mainly in the interpretation of Christian doctrine, in promoting theological reconstruction, regulating the work of ministry, guidance, and pastoral care for the spiritual lives of ministers, pastoral workers, and Christians. The bishop does not have any special administrative authority.

The main duties of a pastor include all aspects of the ministry of his/her church, management of the church and/or home worship gathering, administration of the sacraments, and the pastoral care and guidance of believers.

A teacher assists the pastor in managing the church and/or home worship gathering and in pastoral care and guidance of believers. A teacher may administer the sacraments.

An elder assists the teacher and pastor in church or home worship gathering management. His/her professional duties are limited to the church and its associated meeting points, to pastoral care and guidance of believers, and administration of the sacraments at the request of the pastor.

Article 22 Ordination procedure for ministerial orders:

Candidates for bishop are nominated by the CCC/TSPM executive committee. The candidate's own views should be sought



prior to nomination. The views of the candidate's provincial (autonomous region, municipality) Christian Council and Three-Self organization must be sought, following which the Joint Standing Committees of the CCC/TSPM must elect the candidate(s) by a two-thirds majority vote.

Applicants for ordination to the ministry must apply in writing, be put forward by the church council of his/her church, recommended by the church affairs organization of the local church and be approved by the city (locality, prefecture or league) Christian Council and Three-Self organization of the district in which the church is located, which then reports to the provincial (autonomous region or municipality) Christian Council and Three-Self organization. The provincial (autonomous region or municipality) level organizations should canvass a wide range of views and carry out its own investigation. Only when the candidate passes this check may he/she be ordained.

Teachers applying for the ministry must pass the same procedures of application, selection, recommendation, and inspection as one applying for ordination to the ministry.

Applicants for elder must make a written application. They must then be nominated by the management affairs organization of their church or meeting point, be recommended by the church affairs organization of the local church and approved by the city (locality, prefecture or league) church affairs organization in which their church is located, which then reports to the provincial (autonomous region or municipality) church affairs organization. This provincial (autonomous region or municipality) level organization may then request the city (locality, prefecture or league) church affairs organization to send an ordination team of three or more pastors and elders to perform the ordination.

Article 23 Ordination to ministerial orders should follow the relevant provisions of the "Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian

Clergy.” At least three bishops are required to take part in the laying on of hands for the investiture of a bishop. Ordained ministers of good moral standing and reputation may be invited to join in the laying on of hands. Ordination to the pastoral ministry requires joint laying on of hands by a bishop and at least two ministers, or at least three ministers. Ordination of a teacher requires the joint laying on of hands by at least three ministers. Ordination of elders requires joint laying on of hands by at least three ministers and elders, and the one administering the sacrament must be an ordained minister.

The rite of ordination to holy orders must be held openly in a church; holy orders may not be received in private. Following the liturgy the newly ordained person must, in accordance with relevant regulations, be entered in the records of the corresponding government religious affairs department.

Article 24 Evangelists should be licensed in accordance with the requirements of the “Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian Clergy” and entered in the records of the corresponding government religious affairs department.

Article 25 Gross acts of misconduct, violation of the church order, heretical preaching or violation of criminal law by a pastoral worker require disciplinary action following investigation of the facts. Disciplinary action may include admonishment, suspension from church office, removal from church office, and revocation of ministerial orders.

Disciplinary action against a bishop must be proposed by the National Conference of the CCC/TSPM, which then informs the Christian Council and Three-Self organization in the bishop’s province (autonomous region, municipality). Revocation of a bishop’s ministerial orders must be done with formal deliberation and approval by the Standing Committees of the CCC/TSPM and passed

by a two-thirds majority vote.

Discipline of a minister or teacher must be proposed by the Christian Council and Three-Self organization at the provincial- (autonomous region, municipality) level. Discipline of an elder must be proposed and declared by the city (district, prefecture, league) level Christian Council and Three-Self organization. Revocation of ministerial orders in these cases must be arrived at through deliberation and approval at a formal meeting of the provincial- (autonomous region, municipality) level Christian Council and Three-Self organization.

Article 26 Discipline of evangelists may follow methods outlined in Article 25, to be decided following deliberation and approval by a formal meeting of the city (district, prefecture, league) level Christian Council and Three-Self organization.

Article 27 Disciplinary action may be rescinded following the aforementioned procedures. The corresponding government religious affairs department must be informed of the implementation of disciplinary action and its cancellation.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN:**

### **ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CHURCH (CHURCHES AND HOME WORSHIP GATHERINGS)**

Article 28 The following conditions must be present for the establishment of a church:

A requisite number of believers; a meeting place set aside for church use; ordained clergy in charge of pastoral care of believers; a management organization or preparatory management organization; a church order; a reliable source of funding.

Article 29 The following conditions must be present for the establishment of a meeting point:

A requisite number of believers; a set meeting place; a preacher approved by the local Christian Council and Three-Self organization; a management organization or a preparatory management organization; a meeting point management plan; a reliable source of funding.

Article 30 The city (region, prefecture, league) and county (city, district, banner) Christian Council and Three-Self organization must conscientiously consider the meeting needs of believers, and based on the requirements stated in Articles 28 and 29 of this Order, assist churches and meeting points in the construction of a suitable venue.

Article 31 Churches and meeting points which meet these requirements shall install a senior pastor (or a serving elder as the equivalent). The senior pastor presides over church activities and pastoral care for believers, leads believers in resisting heresy and infiltration, and publicizes and implements all decisions of the CCC/TSPM.

Article 32 Establishment of church and meeting point management organizations

A church shall establish a church management organization (comprised of at least 7 persons). A meeting point shall establish a church affairs management team (comprised of at least 3 persons). A church management organization consists of the senior pastor, pastoral staff/pastors and the requisite number of representatives from the congregation, elected by a meeting of delegates from the congregation or through consultation. The period of service shall be three to five years. Re-election and continued service are al-

lowed, in principle not to exceed two terms. The church or meeting point management organizations shall fully develop democracy, listen widely to the views of the congregation, proceed by division of labor and cooperation and govern the church with one heart and mind.

Article 33 The church or meeting point management organizations shall manage the ministry of the church, including:

Arranging all types of gatherings, worship, and sacraments to proceed decently and in good order, so that heartfelt worship of God may proceed and disorder be prevented.

Preachers shall be determined by the pastor to raise the quality of pastoral care and prevent the spread of heresy, divisions within the church, or illegal and unlawful activities.

Christians, especially lay volunteers, should undergo training to raise their knowledge of the faith and their awareness of abiding by the law, to guard against the invasion of heresy, and to strengthen their study and knowledge of relevant state laws and regulations.

A roll of Christians shall be kept and properly organized to preserve church and meeting point information and archives.

Sound and healthy church and meeting point management organizations and group decision making require regular meetings. Resolutions must be passed by a simple majority of the members of the church or meeting point management organizations. Decisions on important issues (such as large outlays of funds, recommending candidates for ministerial orders, etc.) must be passed by a two-thirds majority vote.

Retired clergy who enjoy good health may be invited to preach in the church or meeting point, if there is need.

The ministry of the church shall be guided and supervised by the local church affairs organization. The church affairs organization shall consult fully with the church or meeting point management organization on issues related to the church or meeting point, and conscientiously hear their views. Decisions reached following

consultation should be implemented by the management organizations of the churches and meeting points.

#### Article 34 Management of finances by churches and meeting points

Management organizations of churches and meeting points shall set up a finance committee to draw up a system of financial management and strictly adhere to it in their work, including procedures for opening the donation box, keeping accounts, issuing receipts, depositing cash in the bank and so on. Pastoral workers and others in charge at churches and meetings points and their families shall not count the money or serve as accountants.

Management organizations at churches and meeting points shall regularly report revenue and expenditure and accept oversight from the local Christian Council and Three-Self organization. When necessary the congregational meeting may request the local Christian Council and Three-Self organization to examine the accounts or request relevant government department to carry out an audit.

A strict system of financial examination and approval shall be formulated. Large expenditures should be discussed and decided collectively by the church and meeting point management organizations.

#### Article 35 Property and business management for churches and meeting points

The property of churches and meeting points belongs to the church and no person may privately occupy or divide it. It is the responsibility of the church or meeting point management organization to take maintain the property and there should be a designated person or team in charge, with a feasible and practical management system in place. Houses used for meetings, buildings, and residences for the clergy shall not be transferred, mortgaged, used

as investment properties or given to others.

To do our general work well includes management and up-keep of property, utilities, and security.

Article 36 Church and meeting point organizations shall uphold self-government, self propagation, and self support and resist all harmful outside interference of any sort.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Article 37 This Order shall be effective on the date of its passage and promulgation by the National Conference of Joint Standing Committees of the CCC and TSPM. Revisions follow the same procedure.

Article 38 This order shall be interpreted by the Standing Committees of the CCC and TSPM.

The Chinese text governs.

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> *Shangdi/ Shen* alternatives are given for each instance of the term God. This reflects historical usage for the name of God within the Protestant community of China. Both “*Shangdi*” and “*Shen*” versions of the Bible are published, so that individual Christians may read and use the term which is part of their inherited faith tradition.

<sup>2</sup> The B.Th. degree is awarded by the national seminary, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, to those with university-level education. The other regional seminaries award diplomas.

## **Proposal for Chinese Christians' Contribution to the Economic Development of Society**

Dearly Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Our 8<sup>th</sup> National Chinese Christian Conference opened in Beijing as the whole nation is conscientiously implementing the spirit of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China, striving to move the great enterprise of building socialism with Chinese characteristics to a new stage. We felt a profound sense of responsibility. The statement during the Party Congress that “persons in religious circles and the masses of religious believers should exercise their positive role in advancing economic and social development” was a great encouragement to us. Reviving the Chinese nation and the comprehensive building of a well-off society are the common goals of all Chinese people, including Christians. To this end, we make this proposal to all Chinese Christians:

1 Uphold the principle of love for country and love for church and the stipulation that “A Christian should be a good citizen”; pray for the people; bring honor to the nation; stress benefiting the country and the people; and promote ethnic and national unity.

2 Honor love-centered Christian ethics; be light and salt; glorify God and benefit the people. Observe the teachings to “love one another” and “(so far as it depends on you,) live peaceably with all” (Jn. 13:34; Rom. 12:18). Strive to promote religious harmony and a harmonious society.

3 Observe the biblical teaching that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35); love those in need; actively



initiate ministries of social service; and strive to take part in social welfare activities.

4 Encourage entrepreneurship; work to build wealth; establish right attitudes toward wealth and a sense of professionalism; and actively engage in building the economy and the society.

5 Care for God's creation; protect the environment; and strive to build a beautiful homeland.

Let us begin to take action and strive together to build a strong, democratic, and harmonious China!

8<sup>th</sup> National Chinese Christian Conference, January 12, 2008.

## **Resolution on Support for the 2008 Beijing Olympics**

The 29<sup>th</sup> Olympics will be held in our capital, Beijing, in August, 2008.

This is not only a grand event in the history of world sport, but a great event for all Chinese people. The Beijing Olympics will showcase the unceasing progress of China's sons and daughters in sports and demonstrate China's rising strength as a nation. We Christians share in this joy together with all China's people.

This Conference calls on Chinese Christians to vigorously support the Beijing Olympics: we want to offer our gratitude and our prayers for the smooth conduct of the Beijing Olympics; actively propagate the Olympic spirit, enhance friendship with people of every nation; actively engage in all kinds of service, supporting through practical action; providing help in their spiritual lives for Christians of every nation coming to China during the Olympics and share our witness as Chinese Christians.

May God bless the Beijing Olympics!

All success to the Beijing Olympics!

8<sup>th</sup> National Chinese Christian Conference, January 12, 2008.

## **This, too, is Christianity**

QIU ZHONGHUI

My dear delegates and co-workers in the Lord,

In Christ, I bring my regards and wish for you all a peaceful New Year.

God, by his grace, is leading the Chinese Church into a new year. Many thanks to the national TSPM for arranging this opportunity for me to share with you all a few experiences and feelings about some of Amity Foundation's endeavors in social service.

### **1 Social Service as a Testimony of God's Love**

God is Love. Bishop Ting has said this; that the all-inspiring God of our Lord Jesus Christ has as his greatest attribute not his omnipotence, not his omnipresence, not his omniscience, not his eternal nature, not even his exalted majesty, but rather his love. The Gospel moves people; it stirs up our hearts. That is why people may not be moved or convinced by religious doctrine, but they are moved when love is manifested; when love is held up and spread around. This all anticipates the day when Love at last fills all the earth. Men and women beyond number are attracted to devote themselves entirely to the endeavors that spread Love across the country.

One could say that Amity holds up the banner of this kind of love. From the 1985 inauguration of reform and opening to the

outside world, this charity organization was established with the involvement of people from all walks of Chinese society. In the twenty-three years since, under Bishop Ting's leadership and with the nurturing help of the CCC and TSPM, Amity has persisted in the service of society, doing work to benefit people and uphold world peace. Persisting in the belief that even the Son of Man came to serve, we strive to serve the society's weak and powerless. Our goal: to deliver compassion and warmth to those masses of good people in dire straits. And to this end, from inside and outside the country has been raised more than one billion *yuan* (~US \$138 million) to bring help to millions of people in over 200 cities and counties in 31 provinces. In 1999, this brought to us the "honorary title for exemplary improvement in the harmonious relationship of minority nationalities," given by the State Council. In 2006, we received the further honor of winning the 2nd China Poverty Eradication Award in the "organization" category, promoting the development of China's public charity and making a positive contribution toward socialism and a harmonious society.

According to statistics at hand, Amity, on behalf of impoverished areas, especially the Midwest Region, used donations to complete more than 890 drinking water projects, over 100 irrigation systems, over 50,000 mu of newly cultivated farmland, more than 30 integrated rural development projects for counties and villages in the west, subsidized 120,000 primary aged children and over 400 college students to go back to school, did construction for over 700 schools, made 1,900 placements of foreign teachers, provided training for 18,000 village-level medical workers and 6,000 township-level health workers, secured medical treatment for over 2,000 polio victims, made over 100 dispatches of mobile medical teams, conducted over 200,000 cataract surgeries, subsidized over 9,700 orphans of nearly 50 social welfare institutes, and cooperated with churches to launch more than 150 social welfare projects. Besides these, each year we have responded when

natural disasters hit the country – such as the hurricanes and flooding in the east, the Yunnan earthquake, the Yangtze river floods – by lending to emergency relief and then rebuilding efforts.

As a member of the Amity Foundation, I have the good fortune, together with all my colleagues, to be part of this contribution of compassion and kindness, spreading the cause of Love and witnessing the progress and development of Amity, which is arising not only from our knowledge, experience, and engagement with the many who have practical needs, but also from a deeper understanding of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **2 The Professional Discipline of Putting Love into Practice**

From the Amity Foundation's first three people raising several hundred thousand *yuan* in the first year, to the current staff of fifty and annual funds of one hundred million being raised, we have now been listed among the country's thirteen biggest public charity organizations. The key is that we stress that Amity staff possess a spirit of utter devotion and compassion, and at the same time skills in their own special fields. Amity is like a big bird. If you desire for it to fly high and fly far, it must have strong healthy bones and mind and body well-toned; in other words we must strengthen our internal structure and our expertise. We can only serve the society well and take great strides in benefiting people if we ourselves are healthy, strong and disciplined on the inside. Our main methods are:

### ***(1) Lay stress on a strategy of research and development***

Amity, cooperating with the Academy of Social Sciences Social Policy Research Center and Nanjing University's Scientific Research Academic Unit, made a thorough study of the development trends of domestic and overseas public charity organizations. From combined historical background and analysis of various environments and research policy trends, we came to a deeper understanding of the prerequisites of societal needs, formulated a

strategic plan, and established a solid foundation for Amity's work.

***(2) Accurately discern societal needs***

More than ten years ago, seeing the problems of climate change in western regions, Amity targeted a succession of five provinces wherein to initiate projects for supplying renewable sources of energy such as biogas, solar power, grassland management and spreading organic agrotechniques for poverty alleviation and environmental protection. Our probes into tree-planting in rocky areas and regions suffering from desertification, to see what beneficial effects can arise in the local economy and environment, have won us praise from all levels of government and society, including Cheng Siwei, vice-chair of the committee of the National Congress and other government officials, who personally visited some of Amity's environmental and poverty alleviation projects and offered enthusiastic affirmations.

***(3) Use strict standards to manage project work***

Every ounce of Amity's funding comes from the contribution of donors. To be a good steward and to use those funds wisely are principles that Amity sticks to when managing projects. To implement these principles, Amity draws upon the participatory model for project management. This standard of project fund control over the workflow helps to consolidate and strengthen project assessment and auditing. We also persist in the practice of regular on-site visits. It is a common saying that you must use your own two legs and two eyes to inspect a project and guarantee that implementation will be bringing forth beneficial results. A relatively small expense can help ensure a relatively great outcome, ensuring the secure use of funds.

***(4) Scrupulously abide by honesty***

Public welfare and charity work depends on [government] credibility for its survival. Amity, in its collaborations with organi-

zations at home and abroad, always commits to following principles of sincerity and honesty, as the saying goes, “Speak the truth, solve real problems, seek realistic results.” In achieving whatever committed goal, no matter what difficulties or hazards may arise, one must honor the commitment. Project funds given, no matter how great or how small, must be duly earmarked for its specified purpose. When a project has surplus funds, regardless of how much, it should be returned to the contributor. Precisely because of these commitments, Amity now has the esteem, cooperation and trust of a great number of domestic and foreign organizations, which in turn propels the Amity Foundation to further develop its causes and undertakings in new ways year to year.

***(5) Persist in blazing new trails in development work***

For many years, in our project funding, we have applied the “trilateral” method. In other words, Amity puts forth one portion, the local government adds their contribution and the beneficiaries also supply a portion themselves in capital and/or labor. Using this method lessens the beneficiaries’ dependence on others, strengthens their commitment and participation in the project, and enhances their self-organization and development capacity.

In addition, bringing together new international theories in societal development and China’s concrete situation today, we can see other “three party relationships” in community development ideology and methods. In a society there are religious believers making a contribution, professionals making a contribution and local government making a contribution; in project implementation we can confront three aspects: local economy, local society and local environment. Out of this we can see how our projects can have “three-fold benefits” built into their objectives.

***(6) Build up education/culture within the organization:***

For over twenty years, as Amity has been spreading the work

of Love, step-by-step there has been cultivated the organization's culture of "three qualities/three strengths" ("Compassion, Commitment, Competence," and "Communication, Cooperation, Creativity") to focus on. This has not only born fruit in inspiring the spirit and commitment of staff, but also has attracted a multitude of volunteers to "come under the spell" of this fulfilling work.

### **3 Cooperate Hand-in-hand to Construct a Harmonious Society**

Now more than twenty years after reform and opening to the outside world, China's economy and society have undergone tremendous changes. But, due to many factors – politics; history; geography; ecology – although our society is in the midst of positive economic changes overall, there are still disharmonious elements existing. Data indicates that over the past twenty years the number of Chinese living in poverty has been substantially reduced, and yet, because the population base in our country is so large to begin with, the actual number of poor people is still very great. As of the end of 2006, the number of citizens still without warm clothing and adequate food was 21,480,000; those still under the poverty line in terms of income numbered 35,500,000. Aside from that, there are currently about 143 million elderly and 82 million handicapped, comprising a huge group of disadvantaged people. These all are in need of concern and assistance from those of us in all walks of life in our society, including those of us in religious circles. Since we know that helping these disadvantaged communities requires meeting emotional and spiritual needs as well as physical needs, it requires each and every one of us to do our best to offer our portion of compassion and summon forth our sense of duty. This is the mission that God has entrusted to every follower of Jesus Christ.

Amity's social service work has brought us to the personal understanding that endeavors of compassion are an indispensable



component of building a harmonious society. It seems especially true that when the church participates in actions that confer benefits on society, it brings uniquely positive dynamics into play. Recently, General Secretary Hu Jintao, during the second study group meeting of the Party Central Political Bureau, stressed the importance of comprehensively carrying out the Party's basic guiding policies regarding religious work, to encourage religious circles to be faithful to their religion and to the country, to advance together in serving our society's traditions, to play a positive function in the society's economic development, and be a part of helping to raise living standards and accelerate socialist modernization. These words from General Secretary Hu will undoubtedly provide a very good opportunity for Christians to come out from their churches and show a great witness in their contributions to social service, and help the development of public charity work to expand even more. I am convinced that more and more people will commit themselves to works of compassion, and that the power of Love will find its way into the hearts of everyone.

It is recorded in the Bible that Jesus walked among us, healing and delivering. He said, "As you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." To be servants to all is our commission as Christians. I am willing to join in this mission with all my brothers and sisters in the Amity Foundation, and, buoyed by the concern and care of the CCC, the TSPM and the many Chinese churches, we will lend our hands in showing forth God's love and grace.

Qiu Zhonghui is General Secretary of The Amity Foundation. He delivered this address to the 8th National Christian Conference. English original. Reprinted from [amitynewsservice.org](http://amitynewsservice.org)

## **Salvation as Reconciliation**

### **An Essential and Possible Understanding**

CHEN YONGTAO

The Christian religion holds that God bestowed salvation upon humankind. For Christians, salvation is an extremely important doctrine; it is also of vital importance in our life of faith. As Christians, we all believe in salvation and receive it willingly. We believe that salvation comes from God; we also believe that it comes from God by the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. Moreover, we can genuinely experience it in our faith lives. This is an absolute truth. It is equally true that “The phrase for ‘our salvation’ in the Nicene Creed points to the purpose of the incarnation; and the standard form for referring to the central figure of Christianity is ‘our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ is the Savior. He became incarnate in the flesh and brought God’s salvation to humankind. How then, did Christ deliver us humans? And what does Christ’s rescue of us, our salvation, imply for Chinese Christians? Do we have a right concept of salvation?

Many Chinese Christians have a rather biased understanding of salvation. This bias manifests itself in two ways: first, Chinese Christians simply lift up the doctrine of redemption. They fail to see the unity of creation and salvation. Second, they understand being saved exclusively as ascending to heaven after death. Salvation is

often viewed simplistically as a person's rescue by God—leaving behind this world that lies under the dominion of sin and death for the eternal happiness of heaven. As Bishop K.H. Ting has put it,

Theological thinking in the Chinese Church tends in one direction, that is, one doctrine is lifted up and that doctrine is the issue of being saved by faith, the question of salvation. We tend to pass over or ignore completely the issue of creation. . . . The Chinese Church sometimes seems to have one doctrine, that of personal salvation, personal grace.<sup>2</sup>

Viewing salvation in simple terms as the human being delivered from the world and entering heaven after death is one-sided and very problematic. First of all, it does not conform to the whole truth of the Bible. From a biblical view, the purpose of God's salvation is not solely to deliver humans out of the world. Rather, the whole world must be redeemed by God along with human beings (see Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:20-22; Rev. 21: 1-5). Salvation is God's renewal of all creation; its purpose is to complete God's creation. Thus, "A few individuals are not the only objects of redemption. The whole creation, the whole world is the object of Christ's work of redemption. . . . Creation contains redemption; the purpose of redemption is to fulfill God's creation."<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, although there are still some people who separate the doctrine of salvation from that of creation, as Christian theology has developed, an increasing number of Christians and theologians tend toward emphasizing creation and salvation as parts of a whole, stressing that salvation is salvation within creation.

Thirdly, the separation of salvation and creation does not conform to the claim of love as one of the basic attributes of God. K.H. Ting holds that "God, whose name is love and whose concern is to create, that is, to redeem, educate and sanctify a humanity that will reach perfection as free and intelligent agents or co-creators with him."<sup>4</sup> Seen in this way, the salvation this God of love

brings to us should not be destructive or divisive, but should rather be supportive, healing, and renewing. Finally, to see salvation as a denial of creation, as a separation from the world, is detrimental to preaching the gospel in China. For many Chinese, such an understanding of the doctrine of salvation, along with the traditional understanding of the doctrine of sin, is a stumbling block to accepting the gospel. Bishop Ting discerned this: “To enlarge the scope of Christians’ concerns, to guide them, with Christianity as their starting point, in considering moral issues which transcend the personal—this to me is the principle by which to raise the quality of our Chinese Christian Church.”<sup>5</sup> For,

...the gospel of Christ is not merely one of personal blessing. In fact it is not that at all. Personal blessing is no more than the fulfillment of selfish personal desires. The gospel of Christ includes the renewal of this world, bringing it into line with the beautiful plan of God who created it through Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Such a view of salvation would undoubtedly be appreciated and accepted by greater numbers of Chinese.

Very clearly, if we cannot have a right understanding of the true significance of salvation, we will certainly be unable to have a better understanding of our faith, and will certainly be unable to better witness to it. For if we do not understand the true meaning of salvation, we cannot understand the true essence of the gospel. What then is salvation? How shall we come to a more appropriate understanding of it?

### **Understandings of Salvation Vary**

Since salvation is so important in our Christian lives of faith, it is incumbent upon us to ask the following question: What is salvation? How does Christianity understand salvation? In general, Christians’ understanding of the nature of salvation is not monolithic; in fact it varies quite a bit. This is to say that there are different mod-

els of understanding of the nature of salvation.

1) Salvation refers to redemption or deliverance, of plucking human beings from sin and death. Deliverance means being rescued from this vale of tears or from the darkness. As Deliverer, Jesus breaks up the forces of darkness and delivers us from their midst, enabling us to break free of sin and death, and freeing us from the curse of the law and the wrath of God. In traditional terms, salvation is defined as delivering human beings from the power and effects of sin,<sup>7</sup> and also refers to “the saving of the soul; the deliverance from sin and its consequences, and admission to eternal bliss.”<sup>8</sup> On the basis of such understandings, people feel that salvation, which redeems them from sin and death, will lead them to Heaven. Heaven is seen as the comfort and compensation for the suffering and ill-fortune of the world and even for death.

In Douglas John Hall’s view, people see salvation and the afterlife as closely linked. “. . . the powerful and lasting connection of salvation with an afterlife is obviously related to two facts of common human experience: grave disappointment with this life, and a combined fear and fascination in the face of death. Those experiences are still with us, all of us.”<sup>9</sup>

For many Chinese Christians, salvation is rescue from the finality of sin and death, going to Heaven and enjoying eternal life; this is what they understand salvation to be. Heaven and happiness after death is their biggest concern.

2) Salvation is a present event. Christians who hold this view maintain that salvation takes place in the here and now. God’s salvation is accomplished in countless “heres” and “nows.” God’s healing and reconciling act of salvation always takes place where we are. Salvation is entirely not an otherworldly matter, not happiness after death, but something we can bring to fruition and experience in this world and in this time. God enters broken human lives in this moment, so that God may share our sufferings and release us from pain and misfortune. In this way, the meaning of salvation

is not simply spiritual or eschatological. Salvation is something which happens in this world, something that happens right now; its historical nature comes to actual completion.

3) Salvation is an act of God. This view regards salvation as an act of God's grace. Salvation comes from God and can only be accomplished through God. Through God's act of salvation, God bestows salvation upon humankind. The special character of salvation is that it is a human experience of God's grace. That is to say, "salvation is something done in and for man by the will and work of God."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, salvation is both a spiritual and an historical act; a past and a future act, as well as a present act. It is a new life spiritually for humans and it can lead to freedom from spiritual, political and social sin.

4) Salvation is health. There are also some Christians who believe that salvation is health, simply life and health. The English word "salvation" comes directly from the Latin *salus*, which implies wholeness, integration, and perfection; which is to say, health. A person healthy in body, mind, and spirit is one who has received salvation.

For this reason, this view is concerned with present human life in this world, as well as with the reality of human existence. Here, salvation "does not primarily signify an 'objective' achievement, but rather a 'subjective,' existential healing and fulfillment of life."<sup>11</sup>

It is easy to see that this view is entirely open toward the essence of human existence. "Salvation means that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, human beings are able to live a life that is human. Hall believes that the salvation spoken of in the Bible and the best Christian traditions does not imply that we are rescued out of our brief nature, our limited nature or our created nature; nor does being saved mean we are saved for another world, or incorruptibility or Heaven. Rather, the whole message of

Christianity about salvation is that it is “the strongest possible affirmation of life, creaturely life.”<sup>12</sup> Such a view links salvation with human life in this world and with the perfection of humans as created beings.

5) Salvation is a sacrifice of atonement. Some scholars hold that atonement is essential to New Testament soteriology (see 1 Jn. 2:2). Atonement is very similar to redemption, but the emphasis is different. In salvation the emphasis is on God. Because of Jesus’ death, God reins in his wrath: the goal of atonement is to bring consolation to God. Atonement emphasizes the sinner. Jesus’ death is the price of sin; the sinner’s sin is removed. Thus atonement explains salvation as calming the wrath of God, while atonement highlights the sinner being pardoned.

6) Salvation is reconciliation or restoration. An increasing number of Christians believes that salvation is reconciliation, that it is restoration. We are separated from God by sin. Jesus is the one who restores, rebuilding our relationship with God, recovering the fellowship between God and humankind. This means that through the work of Jesus Christ, humans are reconciled to God and to the rest of creation. Restoration is a dramatic theme throughout the tradition of Christology; moreover, it is a subject worth studying today, because, for all humankind, the current process of globalization and the reality of pluralization, have made restoration inescapable.

For whatever reason, as created beings, in nearly every area of our lives, we feel a kind of detachment. Because of this we not only need reconciliation with God, we also need to be reconciled with other people and with the world in which we live. Our search for meaning frequently originates directly in this sense of detachment from other people and from the rest of creation. For us, the search for reconciliation has a direct implication for this world. The reconciliation for which humanity is now searching is a restoration between humans and God, through which human beings will be

reconciled to each other. To emerge from the estrangement between ourselves and others and between ourselves and nature and enter right relationships requires that we reconcile ourselves to our identity as created beings; that is, that we reconcile with ourselves.

Obviously, this complicates the mission of Christology, for as Hall says, when the redemption by Christ is spoken of in the Christian tradition, most think that this refers to the reconciliation between humankind and God, the transcendent One, while the concept of reconciliation with oneself and being reconciled with other creatures is nearly unknown.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever the case, people need reconciliation. Because of reconciliation, human life can be more human. Seen in this way, an understanding of salvation as inner healing and as the reconciliation of relationships is very appropriate. According to this understanding, those who have been saved can recover their integrity as creatures and can establish a kind of brand-new relationship with the creator God and with other creatures. This is salvation.

It is not hard to see that the foregoing different understandings of the nature of salvation indicate different dimensions of human existence and since some examples are intertwined, it is difficult to completely distinguish among them. Of course, what should be noted is that the examples presented above cannot encompass all understandings of the nature of salvation. Undoubtedly, there are others.

On the other hand, there are, to a greater or lesser extent, biblical bases for the understandings presented above. Obviously, the differences among them have their roots in the way the biblical message is interpreted and understood. When the church exists in different cultural contexts, preaching the gospel and expressing it in language its hearers are able to understand results in an understanding of salvation influenced by the changing nature of culture. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. But his saving grace is new each morning. Thus, people's understanding



of salvation should change as well.<sup>14</sup>

The world has entered a so-called postmodern or pluralist stage. In this context, a tendency toward pluralism has also appeared in the church's understanding of salvation. And this is not all. An increasing number of people are beginning to understand salvation from the standpoint of existentialism, and so, their understanding of salvation makes a particularly direct connection to human existence, wholeness, and the integrity of creation. Thus creation is seen as pardon, redemption, reconciliation, acceptance, peace, joy, security, health, and integrity, as a gift to humans from God, bringing them freedom, release, grace, renewal, and service.<sup>15</sup>

### **Salvation is the Recovery of Relationship: a Trinitarian Approach**

As we have seen above, Christians have a variety of quite different views of the nature of salvation. But whatever these might be, we cannot deny this fact: Salvation is an act of God for the wellbeing of humankind, directed at our past, present, and future. God's salvation brings to humankind and all creation complete renewal. Salvation is not only directed at our spiritual life, but at our whole existence. As the Presbyterian Church believes,

God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of man's life; social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate. It includes man's natural environment as exploited and despoiled by sin. It is the will of God that his purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil be banished from his creation.<sup>16</sup>

In some sense, the salvation we receive from God is our integrity as creatures. Jürgen Moltmann holds that "*Imago Dei* are men and women in their wholeness . . ."<sup>17</sup> And not only men and women, but creation in all its wholeness. We can say that our wholeness as creatures is not only our salvation, but God's image in us.

How can we best understand the salvation which embodies the whole of human existence? In order to have an understanding of the nature of salvation appropriate to our own context, I think a new angle of approach — an understanding of the Triune God — would be very helpful. A Trinitarian understanding of God tells us that God is not the “absolute Other”; God is not in that “there” that is far from us; God is “the one in relationship with us,” the one who is “here” nearby. This God is intimately related to the world and to humankind. This God is three-in-one. In God’s work of creation and redemption, the three persons in one God work in community. We cannot clearly separate the work of one from the other, as in God the Father is the Creator, Jesus Christ is the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit the bringer of renewal. In fact, all this is the common work of the three-in-one.

A Trinitarian understanding of God not only helps us explain our faith properly, but can help us to best understand God’s salvation in the new contexts in which we find ourselves. Daniel L. Migliore is quite right in saying that a Christian doctrine of God “responds in the light of the scriptural witness to God’s history with the people of Israel and God’s new covenant with all humanity in Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup> In Migliore’s profound view, a Trinitarian understanding of God allows us to see that God’s eternal life is profoundly relational. God exists a tripartite communal relationship and the life of God is essentially self-giving love. Thus, faith in the triune God can set new limits on the meaning of salvation. As Migliore says,

If the triune God is self-giving love that liberates life and creates new community, then there is no salvation for the creature apart from its sharing in God’s agapic way of life in solidarity and hope for the whole creation (cf. Rom. 8:18-39). Thus a trinitarian understanding of God and salvation gives new depth and direction to our still fragile sense of the interdependence of life and our half-hearted commitment to

the struggles for justice and freedom for all people.<sup>19</sup>

Theologian Elizabeth Johnson emphasizes a Trinitarian understanding of God from a feminist viewpoint and discusses God's saving grace from the angle of relationship. In her view, God the three-in-one is a God in relationship. God's work of redemption is part of God's history; God the Father gave his Son to humankind and the Son endured the suffering of the cross in obedience to God the Father. When the Son is forsaken on the cross, the Father and the Son, in different ways, experienced the pain of loss; in their suffering, their mutual love caused the Holy Spirit to work in this irreverent world. "The cross is a Trinitarian event opening up a path for the suffering of the world to enter the very being of God, there to be redeemed finally in the eschatological victory of divine life."<sup>20</sup> "The Trinity provides a symbolic picture of totally shared life at the heart of the universe. It subverts duality into multiplicity. Mutual relationship of different equals appears as the ultimate paradigm of personal and social life. The Trinity as pure relationality, moreover, epitomizes the connectedness of all that exists in the universe."<sup>21</sup>

K.H. Ting also understands God as a community of one in three persons. As Miikka Ruokanen observes,

Bishop Ting...employs [basically two methodological principles] in order to expand Chinese theology from the narrow individual salvational or soteriological understanding of the Christian Gospel to a larger view of how the Holy Trinity relates himself with his creation. First, Ting's understanding of God as love is based on his concept of the Holy Trinity. Second, seeing the activity of the Holy Trinity as universal, larger than the activity of the church, leads Ting to emphasize natural theology.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, Ting's image of God is based on an understanding of the inner relational nature of the Trinity. This Trinitarian understanding

of God helps us to understand salvation as reconciliation or conciliation. It is precisely because God is such a God that the reconciliation between humans and God, as well as reconciliation between persons, becomes possible. Ting says:

What then is the image of God? God is a community, a trinity. The concept of trinity tells us that God is a group, a collective. Thus, God's creation must lead to a human community in the universe, or a communal people. God wants to enlarge his community. The community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not enough. It must be enlarged, to enable all humanity to enter. In Teilhard's words, 'God is not will-to-power, but will-to-fellowship'.<sup>23</sup>

In his essay, "The Cosmic Christ," Ting expresses a similar understanding:

That Christ is cosmic gives us assurance that God is the cosmic lover, not any cosmic tyrant or punisher. He works by education and persuasion rather than coercion and forced obedience. He lures and invites and waits for free response and does not resort to scolding and reprimanding. . . . God's is the will-to-fellowship, not the will-to-power. For Chinese Christians, to discard the image of a vengeful, frightening God, God the omnipotent in dealing with humans, and to come to adore God the Lover, the Sympathizer, the fellow-sufferer who comes to us, is a shift that is truly liberating.<sup>24</sup>

For such a God, as a relationship of love, "It is fellowship God is seeking; he is not a conqueror, not a tyrant who compels submission. The apex of God's creation will be the appearance of a new type of human in the universe, one that will willingly and joyfully be a co-creator with God."<sup>25</sup> The process by which we move toward the apex of God's creation is the process of salvation. God is the will-to-fellowship, not the will-to-power. "God in

his love craves for the emergence in the universe of persons whom he can have fellowship with. Fellowship implies freedom. Human enjoyment of this freedom implies God's respect for human choices. . . ."<sup>26</sup> Ruokanen states that Ting's emphasis on a Trinitarian approach is in line with developments in theology worldwide which emphasize

God as the community of love who creates the universe as an extension of his love and who wishes to have a deep union of love with humanity. The whole history of creation, salvation and sanctification is interpreted in terms of the Trinity who is love and wishes to unite his creation with divine life in a fellowship of love.<sup>27</sup>

How then may human beings enter into the fellowship of God? In Ting's view, human beings are led by Christ, together with the whole creation, into the fellowship of God.

Christians as a little flock are heartened by the vision of Christ leading the whole of creation towards the goal of unity in God. In this saving work of his, all human movements of progress, liberation, democracy, humanization and love are joined. The church is important as a place where Christ is explicitly known, confessed, adored and preached. The world needs the church's gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation and peace. But God's saving work is not coterminous with the boundary of the church. It has the whole cosmos as its arena.<sup>28</sup>

Bradley C. Hanson has rightly observed that the Bible and much of Christian tradition see salvation broadly as an event of deliverance; it indeed has a spiritual center in each and every individual life, but also a dimension which embraces the whole physical and communal dimensions of human life.<sup>29</sup> This is a very appropriate understanding of salvation and I am in agreement with

such broad interpretations. In such an understanding, the Trinitarian approach is extremely helpful.

### **Salvation is related to Restoration: An essential as well as possible interpretation**

Speaking from such a Trinitarian approach, in my own theological understanding, I would like to say that salvation is a restoration of relationships. Salvation implies that humanity has re-entered a vital relationship with God. Yet at the same time, we need to clarify that such a theological understanding need not necessarily suggest a disregard of life after death and is not necessarily in conflict with other understandings of the nature of salvation. It is merely an attempt to offer a different approach.

Why is the nature of salvation a restoration of relationship? Which is to say, why do I see the restoration of relationship as a fundamental part of salvation? I have provided some of my reasons in my discussion of the Trinitarian understanding of God. Here I would like to add to what I have already said. Looking at the biblical record, as creatures of God, humankind cannot live alone. In the story of creation (Gen. 1: 2), man is put into a context of relationship. As a created being, man must live in relationship. Thus, man's place in the triune God's creation, means that the tripartite relationship of God, human beings, and nature has a vital role to play. The mutual relationship among them is the foundation of human existence and human life. For humans, a life detached from relationship is inhuman. We can say that human beings do not exist apart from relationship. A person is an existence in relationship; human lives are points within a network of relationships. These points comprise a vast invisible net. Without relationship to God, without the world, there would be no human being. The world is the creation of the triune God and this triune God is a dynamic relationship.

Conversely, when we are in a right relationship with others or

with other creatures, we will live in the beauty of harmony and the wonder of peace. The Bible sees human repentance as a kind of right foundation for new relationship.

There is a modern poem, “Fragment,” which gives lively expression to this. When a person lives in relationship, a beautiful and harmonious scene emerges, whether we are conscious of it or not.

You are standing on a bridge enjoying the view;  
Someone’s watching you from a balcony.

The moon adorns your window;  
You adorn someone else’s dream.<sup>30</sup>

Though this brief poem lacks a divine dimension, we can easily see that human beings have the possibility of, in fact cannot avoid, living in relationship among other humans and other creatures. In some sense, humanity cannot escape being in relationship. And what is more, when one lives in a relationship of love, a vital and satisfying relationship, harmony and beauty emerge.

In his highly influential work *I and Thou*, Martin Buber, the famed Jewish philosopher of the twentieth century, boldly declared, “In the beginning was relationship.” Buber reveals here that he saw with great acuity that God’s work of creation was an act of relationship. Because of God’s divine act, humanity became a being living in relationship. For Buber, the salvation humans longed for was connected to discovering their connectedness to the Thou. Buber says that “The basic word I-Thou can be spoken only with one’s whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a Thou to become. All actual life is encounter.”

Such an I-Thou relationship is a direct relationship. In this type of relationship, the human being becomes conscious of the

ego and the ego is revealed. When a person lives in this type of I-Thou relationship, s/he becomes a “whole person.” In Buber’s view, the origin of man and of man’s salvation also exists in the I-Thou relationship for this reason. Thus, when a person lives in a broken relationship, that person can be healed by discovering anew the life of (personal) dialogue. Seen in this way, relationship should become the essence of human existence; it is a necessity. As a being, man’s existence must take place within relationship.

I would like to repeat that, apart from relationship, there is no possibility of human existence. Internal and external relationships decide a person’s position within a social group and decide the meaning of one’s existence in the world and in human history. This is an absolute truth. Those who have been deprived of relationship, those who live outside relationship, fall into non-existence, a state of being inhuman. In this sense, the fall of man is but the loss of relationship. When human beings lose their proper relationships, when people damage or warp their relationship with God, with others, with other creatures or with the future; that is sin. That is the fall; that is human sin.

I very much agree with Migliore: “. . .I would contend that the symbol ‘image of God’ describes *human life in relationship* with God and with the other creatures.”<sup>31</sup> To put it precisely, in the creation of the triune God, to be human is to “live freely and gladly in relationships of mutual respect and love.” God certainly does not live in solitary existence, but in community, in the life of the triune God, and in relationship with us, his creatures. Similarly, humankind cannot live in isolation, but must live in coexistence and love in a community; we humans must live in relationship with God and with others of God’s creatures.

In Migliore’s view, man has been created to live in at least three types of relationship, relationships which constitute our essence as creatures. 1) Human beings, created in God’s image, are beings freely addressed by God and free to respond to God. 2)



Human beings find their true identity in coexistence with each other and with all other creatures. Man does not live a purely individual existence but a communal one. 3) We live in relationship to the coming Kingdom of God and with openness to the future. Humankind cannot be satisfied with a given state or condition, whether cultural or natural; humankind is open to the future, “restless for a fulfillment of life not yet realized.”<sup>32</sup>

A number of contemporary theologians who are highly creative thinkers have pointed out that sin is no more than a distortion of the human being’s relationship with God, with other creatures, and with the future.<sup>33</sup> I agree with their view. I believe that understanding sin in this way is both revelatory and in accord with biblical teaching. From the Bible we learn that after our progenitors fell, humanity’s relationship with God and with other creatures, as well as relationships between persons, were distorted. The Bible also shows us that its primary message is related to humanity’s flight from relationship as well as the restoration of relationship by God through redemption. In this, I see the grounds for and the foundation of the understanding of salvation as restoration of relationship. For when sin refers to a distorted relationship,<sup>34</sup> it is very proper to see salvation as a restoration of relationship.

Though I agree that “salvation” is a concept with a broader meaning, I still believe that it can also have an opposite and narrower sense: that salvation is dependent on the restoration of the relationship between humans and God. In my understanding, salvation not only points to a restoration of human existential relationships, but also suggests that the broken relationship between God and man, the broken relationships among persons, and the broken relationship between humans and other creatures, can only be repaired and healed through a particular act or event.

In other words, humans can only discover salvation in the cross of Jesus Christ; or, we can say that humans can only discover in the cross of Jesus Christ the balm that will heal all the

wounds of our existence. In this sense, the cross stands at the center of the world and of human life and is connected to all the many kinds of experiences we have. Jesus Christ's sacrifice upon the cross is for the restoration of relationship, those relationships that have been broken or distorted through sin. The cross is a symbol of the restoration of relationships. The vertical portion of the cross points to the reconciliation of humanity with God. The horizontal beam points to the reconciliation of persons and of humans with the rest of creation. We can also say that Jesus' death on the cross symbolizes the brokenness of our relationships with God, with others, with creation, within ourselves and with the future. This is the meaning of Jesus' cry upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But because of Jesus' death on the cross, Jesus' resurrection brings about the restoration of our relationships: with God, with others, with creation, with the future, and within our own selves.

Understanding sin as the distortion of relationship and salvation as the restoration of relationship is consistent with the spirit of *he* (harmoniousness; being on good terms) in Chinese culture. And this is helpful in turning the stumbling block many Chinese find in accepting the gospel into a stepping stone. Integration and the importance of relationships are special characteristics of Chinese culture. This integrated and relational character of the culture is expressed not only in the philosophical concept of harmony between humans and heaven (*tian ren he yi*), (heaven here is not a mechanical or material object but a vital presence that can be felt), but is also expressed in traditional Chinese culture, especially in the Confucian concern for human ethical relations. *Ren* (benevolence or human heartedness) is a central tenet of Confucianism (*Ru xue*). "The benevolent love people" and "do unto others" illustrate that traditional Chinese culture stresses interpersonal relationships. We live in relationship, and only harmonious relationships between persons can bring about social harmony and prosperity. Chinese

tend to see issues in an integrated and relational way. Thus, harmony is seen as healthy and normal. Conversely, disharmony is regarded as disease.

Traditional Chinese culture lacks the Christian concept of sin; thus, in a Chinese cultural context, when we speak of the doctrines of “sin” and “salvation” using concepts we have received from Western culture, such ideas often meet with rejection. To improve our preaching of the gospel, we need to use cultural concepts that are not unfamiliar to Chinese in explaining the doctrines of sin and salvation. In this way, understanding sin as the breaking of relationship and salvation as the restoration of relationship is appropriate and easier for most people to accept.

Thus, I very much appreciate Hanson’s conclusions with regard to salvation. He says quite appropriately: “Salvation not only affects one’s inner thoughts and priorities; it also changes one’s relationships . . . Thus salvation influences the external world as well as a person’s inner life.”<sup>35</sup> From this perspective, we can say that salvation is the reform and renewal of relationship. When we live in new relationship, we are in fact experiencing God’s salvation right then.

Hall’s view is similar. He is profoundly aware that Christians who live in the North American context have not established genuine relationships with God and with other persons, and have not taken responsibility for others. Thus he believes that as human beings, Christians must indeed be rescued from the bonds of conditions such as anxiety, meaninglessness, uselessness, etc. In this sense, Hall agrees with Christians whose theological views are more conservative, in believing that the environment in which human beings exist must be thoroughly “redeemed.”<sup>36</sup> What Hall has realized is in fact that all humankind’s distorted and broken relationships are in dire need of restoration and renewal.

Healing and restoration of broken relationships between humankind and God, between people, and between humans and the

rest of creation, is an event that happens both in the present and in the existential dimension. As healing and restoration of relationships, salvation is not some cold contract between God and humankind. On the contrary, in the interaction that marks the act of salvation, the movement of salvation can bring with it an entirely new relationship of love.

No Christian can deny that through Jesus Christ God bestows salvation upon human beings and that because of this, salvation comes from God. In the Bible we see that God's redemption or salvation implies that those who have been saved have established a new kind of relationship with God and with other people. When Lot was saved, he had a new relationship with God. When the people of Israel were saved from Egypt, they had a new relationship with God and they attempted to build a new community. For me, the message of the Book of Jonah is especially important. This message tells us that the salvation God gave to the people of Ninevah was a restoration of their relationship with God and with other people. When they had heard what Jonah proclaimed to them, not only did they repent of their sin of opposing God, they also repented of the evil they had done to other peoples they had oppressed.

In the New Testament, the teachings and work of Jesus are also focused on the restoration of relationship. John the Baptist's proclamation hinted that those who would follow Jesus must enter into a new relationship with him (see Lk. 3:1-17). Luke 4: 17-19 has been called the Proclamation of the Messiah. There we see as well that the mission of Jesus Christ was to restore and establish new relationships. "The Sermon on the Mount" also tells us that the restoration or building of new relationships is the responsibility of Jesus' disciples. Following Jesus implies that we must enter into new relationships with God and with others. All people are our neighbors; we must care for them and show them our concern and love. Establishing a new relationship with God is exactly the same

as establishing new relationships with others (see Mt. 5: 7). In the epistles of Paul, especially when he speaks of a new creation, we can also see that there is a close connection between salvation and the restoration of relationship.

I want to mention two other biblical examples. One is the story of Zacchaeus. He was a sinner, but Jesus called him and went to stay in his house. The moment he saw Jesus, he “repented”, and entered a new relationship with God and with other people. And so Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house.” The other is the parable of the prodigal son. When the younger son received his inheritance from the father, he left home. In fact he was leaving his relationship with his father, with his brother, and with his whole family. He went to live in a foreign land where he lived a life that was less than human. However, “he came to himself,” he realized his error and returned home. His father embraced him, and he restored his relationship with his father and with the rest of his family. For the prodigal son, that was salvation.

### **Salvation is the restoration of relationship: Four degrees of relationship**

In the Bible, the story of Zacchaeus and the parable of the prodigal son symbolize the situation of all humankind and point to the possibility that the broken relationship between human beings and God can be restored. This is the work of Jesus Christ for all humankind, this act of salvation. Thus, from the biblical perspective, to say that salvation is the restoration of relationship or the building of a new relationship is consistent with what the Bible teaches. As Bishop Ting has said,

What makes the gospel of Christ a gospel and indeed *the* gospel does not lie in its recognition of the existence of God, nor in its affirmation of the next world, or in its pointing out that humans are sinful and helpless. This is not yet Christianity, not yet the gospel. What makes the Christian gospel *the*

gospel lies in its proclamation that this God is love, that this God reconciles humanity to himself and human persons to each other. To this end, God became flesh, and opened the door of reconciliation through the cross. This Risen, Ascended Christ is the Lord of Creation. He upholds the universe with his word of power and all the riches of creation have their place in him. He is the fountainhead of reconciliation. He scatters the seeds of reconciliation over the whole earth. He desires humanity to be reconciled to himself and human persons to be reconciled to each other. This is what makes the gospel the Gospel.<sup>37</sup>

Human hearts long for reconciliation; it is what we seek. Reconciliation is also the basic message the Bible and Christian preaching wish to spread. Salvation is the restoration of relationships. There are at least four levels of meaning in this phrase. That is to say that there are four degrees of relationship that salvation seeks to restore.

1) Restoration of our relationship with God. Sin distorts and damages the human relationship with God. Sin is the opposite of God's grace and causes us to deny our relationship with God, as well as denying the necessity of God's grace. Sin causes us to reject God's grace, absolutizing our own self and to harbor evil against other persons. Sin also causes us to hate ourselves. Thus in the most basic sense, the question of *being human*, strictly speaking, becomes one of *becoming human*. Our human nature has been weakened, blocked, and corrupted by sin. Sin causes people to be warped and perverse, to rebel against God, to break all sorts of human relationships and to reject the human self. The issue of becoming human is one of restoring the image of God within us through reconciling with God and accepting pardon and new life. Christian revelation declares that the human being's most important relationship is the relationship with the his/her creator God. Through creation and redemption, we are children of God in a

dual sense. In the Incarnation, God breaks through the human sense of isolation. In the person of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, God identifies with us, and we have received a new status, beyond, as well as in, this world. In Jesus Christ, God has bestowed salvation on us. As God's gracious gift, salvation, through Jesus Christ, can help us to restore our relationship with God. As the Bible says,

But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body, thus putting to death that hostility through it (Eph. 2:13-16).

Reconciliation between persons, and reconciliation between human beings and creation, presupposes reconciliation between human beings and God. Reconciliation between human beings and God is the most fundamental kind of reconciliation. And so salvation is first of all the restoration of the relationship between human beings and God.

Humanity's being reconciled to God is of course more fundamental than human persons being reconciled to each other. When a person has been reconciled with God, that person is motivated to work at reconciling with others. . . . Of course, the more normal thing would be to be reconciled with God through Christ first and then through the love of God, to engage oneself in the work of reconciling with and loving others, and through this work, to deepen one's knowledge of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

As Christians, “as long as what we are doing, no matter what it is, helps the church to spread this gospel of reconciliation, enabling people to be reconciled with God and with each other, then our work has value. . . . The church has been preaching this gospel of reconciliation for nearly two thousand years. This gospel has the cross, a symbol of humiliation, for its standard. It asks people to admit their guilt and to confess their sins.”<sup>39</sup>

2) Restoration of the relationship between humans and creation. Sin also distorts and damages the relationship between persons and that between human beings and creation. Sin is a person’s refusal to coexist with or to live for others; this sin causes us to willingly enslave others or to be enslaved by them. The issue of becoming human is also one of restoring relationships with our companions, enabling us to be with them as brothers and sisters. At the same time, reconciliation with others, and with the whole of creation, is a sign of our restoration of relationship with God. One’s own consciousness of personality is hidden in this kind of dual reconciliation. Salvation indeed redeems us out of sin and helps us to restore relationships with others and with creation. In 1979, at Riverside Church in New York City, Bishop K.H. Ting said in a sermon:

More and more Christians are realizing that the transcendent is encountered not so much “out there” as within the interpersonal relationships of finite beings. We really open ourselves to the hold and the sacred and to meeting God himself as we dive into the depths of human relations, no matter how secular they seem. God being love, it is only in love that we come into touch with the uttermost reality of the universe and get ourselves attuned to the character of God.<sup>40</sup>

Looked at in this way, hidden in relationships between persons is the relationship between human beings and God. When the



person's relationship with God is normal, interpersonal relationships can be normal. And, when interpersonal relationships are normal, a person can better understand the relationship between human beings and God and more easily understand the gospel of reconciliation Christ has given us. Indeed, "in a stable and unified society, people can more easily understand the reconciliation bestowed by Christ. The reconciling gospel of Christ is better able to make a contribution to stability and unity in such a society."<sup>41</sup>

Salvation points not only to the restoration of interpersonal relationships, but to the restoration of relationships between human beings and creation. I very much appreciate Hall's view of our relationship with creation. He speaks of human beings as a special human existence and the rest of creation as "extrahuman."<sup>42</sup> This is an interesting distinction between humankind and the rest of creation, and a very insightful one. It can certainly help us in reconciling with other creatures (including other humans) and including "extrahumans." "The church is important as the place where Christ is explicitly known, confessed, adored and preached. The world needs the church's gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation and peace. But God's saving work is not coterminous with the boundary of the church. It has the whole cosmos as its limit."<sup>43</sup> When we live within salvation we will enjoy love, equality, and fellowship. God has given these things to us through Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

As the Bible says: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:27-28). Interpersonal reconciliation, reconciliation between persons and creation, requires Jesus Christ's gospel of love, requires the healing of love. The wounds of war, hatred, terror, and violence are to be found everywhere in the world today. These wounds require healing. Thus, building close and loving relationships between persons, relationships of mutual understanding, relationships of mutual

forgiveness and tolerance, relationships of equality and mutual help, requires Jesus Christ's gospel of love and reconciliation.

3) Restoration of relationship with the future. Sin also damages and distorts human beings' relationship with the future. Sin is a rejection of the future promised by God. Sin produces in us indifference, drawing back, dread, and unfounded suppositions. This causes people to have too much confidence in ourselves and in our own goodness. People think they can rely on their own efforts to enter God's kingdom. Then there are those who think they have no merit to speak of, that they have no future, no tomorrow. Thus they lock themselves out of the possibility of a future.

But salvation, as redemption from sin, is open to the future. It has a future-orientation. The New Testament authors all harbor this hope: We will be redeemed. And further, we will enter a new heaven and a new earth. Hope can bring about influential changes for the present. In fact, through its creative influence, future salvation influences present reality, and confirms the discovery that through the mode of its influence past events are transformed into present circumstances.<sup>44</sup> Salvation is intimately connected to the future. Without future hope, there can be no present salvation. Christianity is a religion of great hope. Christian salvation is a salvation of great hope. In God's salvation, human beings move toward a future hope.

Hope is of great importance to human beings. At times, when there is no hope, there is no courage to go on living. This reminds me of a story from World War II. Two Jewish young people fell in love in a Nazi concentration camp. We can easily imagine that their daily lives in the camp were ones of great suffering. But they did not lose hope, because they had hope in the future. Opposite the camp was a mountain and on its top, a house. Often when they were outside for exercise they would gaze at this house, imagining that its occupants led wondrous and comfortable lives. And that was a source of comfort and courage for them. They believed in a

future filled with hope; they hoped that one day, they too could live free lives like the people in that house. When the nightmare of war had finally ended, they emerged from the concentration camp and went immediately up that mountain to see that house that had kept their hope alive. When they got to the summit, they found nothing more than a ruin. There was nothing there but the walls they had gazed at from the concentration camp. This story tells us that even in the worst of times, people should embrace hope. Christian hope is not simply a nice wish, it is hope with a root and foundation, because Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Hope is in the future; the future is a future filled with hope. Or, the future is hope and hope is the future. If we are not open to the future, how will we be able to experience God's salvation? "And now faith, hope and love abide..." (1 Cor. 13: 13). Hope tells us we should establish a new kind of relationship with the future. Here I would like once again to refer to Hall. He believes that true salvation must have a hope. But that hope must be a genuine hope and not shallow blind optimism. True "salvation" needs a "hope that is not afraid to have a dialogue with despair."<sup>45</sup>

4) Restoration of relationship with the self. In addition to damaging and distorting our relationship with God, other persons, creation, and the future, sin also damages and distorts our relationship with our own self. An idolatry that centers on the self, or on other persons, that subjugates and enslaves creation, or humans, etc: all these things point to the fact that in sin we have damaged and distorted our relationship with our very selves. We are creatures of God; we are human beings. We are the crown of the glory of God's creation. However, we frequently find it easy to see ourselves as God, or at times, just as easily, as devils. These are both expressions of damage to and distortion of our relationship to the self. Thus, salvation is also a movement which, through the love and redemption of the triune God, restores our self-relationship.

As Moltmann says, human beings are related to themselves,

yet the same time, they are withdrawn from themselves.<sup>46</sup> Within their souls, humans discover their own external salvation as well as the inner transcendence it brings about. This is the restoration of relationship with the self. It can redeem us from the midst of isolation, alienation, hatred, indifference, selfishness, and lack of feeling, enabling us to enter into relationship, love, compassion, self-sacrifice, enthusiasm, etc. In some sense, this is our rebirth. Rebirth is the emergence of a new self, a new life. Rebirth comes to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the hard work of the Holy Spirit, a brand new self will be born.

### **Conclusion: This is salvation from the Triune God**

Salvation does not refer simply to a process whereby once a person believes in the Lord, his or her soul will go to heaven when s/he dies, as if being saved meant only saving the soul. In fact, the salvation Christianity preaches is the fullness of salvation, the whole human person being saved, body and soul, as well as the spirit and material being of the whole of creation. God's salvation is the renewal and reconciliation which God brings in Jesus Christ for humankind and for all the created world, enabling human beings to enter into a completely new relationship, and to have a more perfect existence.

How then may we enter into God's salvation, how realize the restoration of relationships? The answer is, only by relying on the love of the triune God: God's pardon, Jesus Christ's agency of redemption, and the work of the Holy Spirit which gives us strength. Of course, as human beings, we still have the responsibility to respond actively to God's salvation. On the one hand, we should accept God's love. Not only "the love God has for us," but "God is love" (1Jn. 4: 16). "For God so loved the world (humans) that he gave his only Son..." (Jn. 3:16). Thus, for us, accepting God's salvation is accepting God's wondrous love. We should also love God and love each other. Jesus Christ tells us that the greatest

commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves (see Mt. 22: 37-39). This is the new commandment he gave us — telling us to love God and to love each other. We should love each other in the same way that God loves us (see Jn. 13: 34).

When, in love, we have a new relationship with God, with other creatures and with other persons, we are in heaven; when we are in distorted and loveless relationships, we are in hell. That is dreadful death. Yet “Life in God’s Spirit is *life against death*.”<sup>47</sup> God has pardoned our sins, and is present with us in Jesus Christ. “Jesus saves. His person and his work, his presentative life, belong to that drama of God’s long ‘labor’: the bringing forth of creatures who, in the midst of this ‘good’ world are ready to say Yes to their creaturehood, to take up their vocation within creation, and to find precisely there-here- all the meaning that they need.”<sup>48</sup>

The God who pardons and loves us is the God present with us in Jesus Christ. God is love. “The love that supports and sustains us all in the bond of relations is derived from the love that forms the basis of the union between God and humanity.”<sup>49</sup> In Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, love has the power to lead us into re-creation and new relationship. This is what Moltmann means when he says that God broadens us. When we love God and love others, we leave behind our narrowness of heart and enter into the broad place of love for life.<sup>50</sup> Without love, a new creation will not emerge; without love, there cannot be new relationship; without love, there cannot be salvation for humankind.

Our love is also vitally connected to our life. Moltmann understands the vitality of life as “love of life.” This love of life connects human beings to all other living things. Vitality is nothing other than true humanity. Therefore, in this sinful world, genuine spirituality is the search on behalf of life for lost love.<sup>51</sup> In the process of this search we need to make a full affirmation of life.

This is the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection implies that rather than being redeemed from

the world, we will be redeemed with the world. Christians' spiritual experience certainly does not cause us to distance ourselves from the world. When we are aware that there is even more hope in this world, then we are able to take upon ourselves more of the world's sighs and sufferings. When we are united with the world as one, it becomes our vitality, our love for life, our love for new life. When, in the midst of our vitality, we open ourselves up to the world, to life, to the future, we are open to God's marvelous promise.

Because of hope and faith, the author of Revelation saw in a vision the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ... 'the home of God is among the mortals, he will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away' (Rev. 21: 1-4).

This is the fulfillment of salvation, an entirely new creation. In this new creation, all relationships will be renewed. There will be no more distorted relationships, no more pain, tears, or disappointment. Humankind will live in harmonious relationship with God, with creation and with other persons. This is God's salvation.

A number of years have gone by since the Chinese Church began its task of theological reconstruction and the initiative has already seen results. In the course of continuing to promote and deepen theological reconstruction, we must make a new interpretation of outdated, over-Westernized, theological ideas that are out of sync with our present society. I feel that in our present context, it is extremely important to bring some new understandings to

bear on the nature of salvation. Today the whole country is calling for the building of a harmonious society. There is no need for reticence; Christianity has a contribution to make to the construction of a harmonious society. And understanding salvation as the restoration of relationship not only helps Chinese people to better know the gospel and better understand the Christian message of salvation, it undoubtedly will allow the Chinese Church to be better able to participate in the construction of a harmonious society.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Alan Richardson and John Bowden, *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 519.

<sup>2</sup> K.H. Ting, "Creation and Redemption," in *Love Never Ends: Papers by K.H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 479. The English original is slightly different from the Chinese translation used by the author. In the translation the final phrase reads "...one doctrine, that is, be saved and go to heaven when you die."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 480.

<sup>4</sup> K.H. Ting, "The Cosmic Christ," in *Love Never Ends*, 413.

<sup>5</sup> K.H. Ting, "Creation and Redemption," in *Love Never Ends*, 480.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 482.

<sup>7</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 967.

<sup>8</sup> This is the first definition of "salvation" found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Quoted from Marcus J. Borg, *The God We Never Knew* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), 156.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Why Christian?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 43.

- <sup>10</sup> Roger Hazelton, "Salvation," in *A Handbook of Christian Theology* (Fontana Books, Collins, 1958), 339.
- <sup>11</sup> Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, eds., *Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1989), 459.
- <sup>12</sup> Douglas John Hall, 41.
- <sup>13</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Professing the Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 505.
- <sup>14</sup> For example, in the early church, and especially in the early writings of Paul, "salvation was often seen as a future event. In this future salvation event, God would judge the world, destroy the evil one and build his final kingdom on earth (see Rom. 13:11). But in Paul's later writings, salvation was no longer "the hope of salvation" as in 1Thessalonians, but directly spoken of as "the helmet of salvation" (Eph. 6:17). [note abridged]
- <sup>15</sup> See *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 519-521, and Arne Sovik, *Salvation Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1973), 13-24.
- <sup>16</sup> "The Confession of 1967," in the *Book of Confessions* (Study Edition) (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996), 330.
- <sup>17</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 94.
- <sup>18</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 56.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.
- <sup>20</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 207.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 222-223.
- <sup>22</sup> Miikka Ruokanen, "A Theology of Wisdom for China," *Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 3 (2005): 59-60.
- <sup>23</sup> K.H. Ting, "Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin," in *Love Never Ends*, 202.
- <sup>24</sup> "The Cosmic Christ," 416.
- <sup>25</sup> K.H. Ting, "Understanding the Heart of God," in *Love Never Ends*, 442.
- <sup>26</sup> "One Chinese Christian's View of God," in *Love Never Ends*, 436.
- <sup>27</sup> Ruokanen, 60.
- <sup>28</sup> "One Chinese Christian's View of God," 439.



- <sup>29</sup> Bradley C. Hanson, *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 238-240.
- <sup>30</sup> Bian Zhilin (b. 1910), "Fragment," trans. Michelle Yeh, in *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, Michelle Yeh, ed. and trans. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 51.
- <sup>31</sup> Migliore, 122.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid, 123-128.
- <sup>33</sup> These include Daniel L. Migliore, Elizabeth A. Johnson, Mary A. O'Neill, and Catherine M. Lacugna.
- <sup>34</sup> On this point, see my essay, "Human Beings are Made in the Image of God," in *Selected Essays on Theological Reconstruction* (2004) (Shanghai : CCC/TSPM, 2004), 227-230. In that essay I continue in the vein of Migliore's view, seeing sin as a distortion of the relationships between humans and God, humans and other creatures (including other humans) and humans and the future.
- <sup>35</sup> Hanson, 258.
- <sup>36</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Why Christian?*, 46-49.
- <sup>37</sup> K.H. Ting, "Our Human Longing for Reconciliation," in *Love Never Ends*, 246.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 246-247.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 247.
- <sup>40</sup> K.H. Ting, "Human Collectives as Vehicles of God's Grace," in *Love Never Ends*, 47.
- <sup>41</sup> K.H. Ting, "Our Human Longing for Reconciliation," 248.
- <sup>42</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Why Christian?*, 21.
- <sup>43</sup> "The Cosmic Christ," 415.
- <sup>44</sup> Hanson, 30.
- <sup>45</sup> Hall, *Why Christian?*, 59.
- <sup>46</sup> Moltmann, 91.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., 98.
- <sup>48</sup> Hall, *Professing the Faith*, 553.
- <sup>49</sup> C.S. Song, *Third-Eye Theology*. Revised version (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 106.
- <sup>50</sup> See Moltmann, 98.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 86, 95.

## **What Kind of Christianity Do We Hope for? Address at the Conference on “The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church”**

WANG ZUO'AN

I am very honored to be here at this major conference, “The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church.” Allow me to express hearty congratulations to the conveners of the conference, the National Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (TSPM0 and the China Christian Council (CCC) and to wish all of you here warm greetings on behalf of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs and its Director, Ye Xiaowen.

As we gather here today to discuss our theme of “The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church,” our most important objective is to learn from the past for a better future, to look back at the entry of Christianity into China and its historical development here, as a means to ponder its present direction and future paths for our work.

Christianity was part of the colonial expansion of the modern West, entering the vast lands of Africa, America and Asia. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity spread into the interior of China on a large scale and this was connected to military conquests of the Western colonizers. Precisely because of this sort of beginning, the people of China labeled Christianity a “foreign religion,” a label that endured for over a hundred years. The historical role of the

Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement has been like that of a switchman on the railroad, switching the engine of Christianity from a broken rail line to one that is safe and secure. As a result, Christianity gained new life, and a future.

Today, Christianity is a member of the great Chinese household. But I am afraid there is still some way to go for Christianity to become truly Chinese, to reach the point of complete compatibility with Chinese society and culture. The proposal to construct socialism and a harmonious society presents a historical opportunity for Chinese Christianity to realize its full potential in society. People in the church should take full advantage of it. This will speed up the historical process by which Christianity merges with Chinese society. It will be a new step on the path of making Christianity compatible with socialist society.

Review the past to gain new insight into the present. We look back at the history of Chinese Christianity in order to resolve a basic question: how can Christianity become an organic, harmonious component of Chinese society and play an even more active role in that society? Bishop K.H. Ting has said: “Our hope and vision is for this kind of Chinese Church: one that has a rich theology, that is rational, more compatible with Chinese socialist society and one that can aid Christians in establishing a more harmonious and convincing Christian faith and witness.” Such a Christianity would certainly be attractive to the people and be welcomed by all. Here I would like to list four hopes of my own. I offer them for consideration to my friends in Christian circles: they express the kind of Christianity I would like to see in China.

### **1. We anticipate a Christianity that adheres to the three-self principle.**

Chinese Christianity initiated the Three-Self Movement and changed the destiny of Christianity in China; thereby also, to a great extent changing Chinese people’s perceptions of Christian-

ity. Under the current policies of reform and openness, the three-self principle will be tested anew.

Some overseas Christian organizations continually malign the three-self principle, seeking to return to China and recover their old relationships, with Chinese as their subordinates. Some extend massive support to so-called “house churches.” They want to compete with patriotic Christian organizations, attempting to become civil political forces that do not cooperate with the government. Some boast that by supporting the development of Christianity they will start a “war for the souls of China,” defeating the “Chinese dragon” with the “Lamb of God.” Influenced by these groups, some Christians in China are not able to treat history accurately. Their excuse is that some missionaries did good things in China. They do not recognize the links between Christianity’s entry into China and the war of invasion the colonial powers waged against China and they thus deny the fundamental reasonableness and necessity of the Three-Self Movement. And some are apathetic about the exploitation of Christianity by outside forces seeking to infiltrate China. They go so far as to incur serious losses as they covet small gains, facilitating such infiltration.

The three-self principle is not self-isolation. The Chinese Church is willing to cooperate and have exchanges with churches of every nation on a fair and friendly basis. But of course, if the object is to uproot you, to regain control of you, even to force political ideas on you, then that is unacceptable. The facts have shown that in a situation of openness to the outside, the Chinese Christian three-self principle has not lost its importance or become outmoded; rather its importance is even more evident. If the three-self principle is abandoned, Chinese Christianity, which has been moving smoothly along in the right direction, will veer off track and meet with a calamity of historical proportions. Faced with this grim possibility, Chinese Christians, in a spirit of responsibility for the country and for the Chinese Church, should consciously take up

their historical mission and continue to hold high the banner of three-self patriotism, persevere on the path of an independent and self-run church. They should respond to changing circumstances, meet new issues as they appear, elucidate theologically the reasonableness and necessity of three-self and continually enrich and deepen three-self in the reality of the church. Through a sure-footed approach to its work, the church should strive to realize a great unity among Christians, founded on three-self patriotism, which will effectively defend against infiltration by overseas groups who seek to exploit Christianity in order to infiltrate China.

## **2. We look for a Christianity with a deep love for its own nation.**

Love of country is a revelation and teaching found in the Bible, as well as a splendid tradition of Chinese Christianity. History has shown that the fate of Chinese Christianity is closely linked to that of China itself. Without a China that is independent, strong and prosperous, the Chinese Church could not be an equal part of the universal church, but would continue in its tragic role of a “colonized church.” “Patriotism as honor; endangering the nation as disgrace” is the heart of the socialist concept of honor, one that all Chinese citizens, which includes Christians, should respect. Christians in particular must manage the relationship between love for the country and love for the church, they must be both good Christians and good citizens, bringing love for country and love for church into an organic whole. They cannot make love for church concrete while love for country remains an abstraction.

When Christians today speak of patriotism, its concrete expression must be to uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system, to safeguard national interests as well as social and public interests, in engagement along with all ethnicities in projects of national reform and construction, to maintain the principle of independence and self-management and to

resist infiltration by foreign groups seeking to exploit Christianity. There is a view overseas that Christians are more suited to life under Western democratic systems. This is a kind of enticement with an ulterior motive behind it, an attempt to make Chinese Christianity into a force they can exploit in changing the Chinese socialist system. Some overseas forces urge Chinese Christians to abandon three-self and throw off government supervision; this is an open call for Chinese Christianity to become an opposition force within Chinese society. Influenced by these overseas forces, some people use opposition to three-self and the refusal to register as standards by which to judge who is a true Christian. They consider that those who do not meet their standard are not saved and use this view to cheat ordinary Christians. Some use the excuse “listen to God not to man,” to undertake illegal and unlawful activities in the name of Christianity, threatening social stability. When the Chinese government punishes them according to the law, they seek help from overseas forces to pressure the Chinese government on claims of “religious persecution.”

As sons and daughters of the Yellow Emperor, born and bred in China, Chinese Christians must have a deep love for the nation that nurtured them, be pleased at their nation’s development, strengthen their people’s confidence and sense of pride, and consciously resist all actions that might harm the national interest or image. Only a patriotic Christianity will be welcomed by the people and have bright prospects. The people will feel revulsion for a Christianity which relies on foreign forces in their attempt to secure a privileged status. Such a Christianity will have no future in China.

### **3. We look for a Christianity that will meld with Chinese culture.**

There is a huge difference between Christian culture and Chinese culture, but both have certain fruits, ethical and moral values of human civilization, in common. In contemporary China, striv-

ing for a Chinese Christianity and striving for the adaptation of Christianity to socialist society are one and the same. Sinification of Christianity does not mean assimilation of Christian culture by Chinese culture, nor, naturally, does it mean using Christian culture to transform Chinese culture. Rather, it means bringing about the merger of Christian culture with Chinese society through an explanation of those elements of Christian culture which are compatible with social progress. Christian culture must become rooted in the soil of Chinese culture before it can enjoy growth and renewal and at the same time add new color to the diverse garden of Chinese culture.

The important point here is that Christian thinking on harmony must be expounded and Christianity should be engaged in the building up of a harmonious culture in society. Important aspects of the harmonious society are also advocated by Christianity—ethical rules such as patriotism, respect for work, honesty, friendship, developing social ethics, professional ethics, family values education, forming a sense of honor throughout society, uprightness, promoting a habit of harmony, gender equality, respect for the aged and care for the young, help for the poor and relief to those in difficulty, courtesy and tolerance in relationships. A love of money, hedonism, and extreme individualism have no place in the harmonious society, nor in Christianity. Thus, Christianity is entirely capable of and certainly should play a positive role in building up a harmonious society.

Theological reconstruction must be promoted in line with the needs of constructing a harmonious society. Correct explanations are needed of classic biblical and traditional Christian concepts related to restraint, tolerance, humility, equality, universal love, self-improvement, harmonizing interpersonal relationships, leading people to goodness, dealing correctly with the important relationships between church and society, Christian and non-Christian, faith and reason, love for country and love for church, love for

God and love for humanity, as we strive to build up a harmonious church and promote a harmonious society.

#### **4. We look for a Christianity that takes up its social responsibility.**

China has entered upon a crucial period of reform and development. Unprecedented social reform has greatly invigorated China's progress toward development, but inevitably brings various contradictions and problems in its wake as well. To bring these contradictions and problems to a happy solution requires the active cooperation and common effort of all sectors of society. In this kind of situation, if the Christian Church simply focuses on church building, on "producing fruit," and does not express care for society, there is a danger that it will fall by the wayside as time moves on, and will be marginalized by society.

Care for society is a Christian tradition; serving others is a Christian duty. The church and its members must strive to carry out their social duty in their secular lives, safeguard social stability, promote social harmony, aid those in difficulty, bring about fairness and justice, and genuinely become the light and salt of the world, spreading truth, goodness, beauty, and hope.

Christian groups at every level should strengthen their self-construction and perfect their rules and regulations to implement running the church democratically. They should improve their working style, be in close contact with their members, create an atmosphere of unity, and promote harmony in their own organizations. They need to handle the work with private meeting points of Christian believers well, publicizing the religious policy and regulations, and carrying out the "Regulation on Religious Work." They need to promote the use of lawful venues for religious activities and realize a great unity on the basis of Three-Self patriotism.

Christians must be educated to increase their consciousness



of complying with the laws, keeping activities within lawful boundaries, and dealing wisely with all the contradictions and disputes that may touch on Christian groups. They should improve their knowledge of the law to protect Christianity's legal rights and avoid unwise and excessive behavior. They should wholeheartedly serve society, run enterprises for the public good, have a positive attitude, provide timely help, launch activities for the poor and destitute, for the care of the elderly, disaster relief, care for the handicapped, and provide free clinics, striving to open a path of service to society that is beneficial to social progress as well as to the healthy development of the church.

Looking back on the development of Christianity in China over two centuries, there has been humiliation as well as glory. Broadening our gaze to Christianity in China now and in the future, there are opportunities and challenges; the burden is heavy and the road is long. The Central Committee "Resolution on Important Issues in Building a Harmonious Socialist Society" states that "We must give full play to the positive role of religion in promoting a harmonious society." This is an affirmation of the positive social function of religion, as well as an expectation and spur to religious circles. By complying with the demands of historical development and keeping to the correct path of adaptation to socialist society, the Christian religion will be welcomed by socialist society and meet with the approval of the people.

Wang Zuo'an is Deputy Director of the State Religious Affairs Bureau. *The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church* (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2007), 1-5.

## **Face History Honestly, Strive to Open up the Future**

JI JIANHONG

2007 is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Morrison's arrival in China. Some Christian groups and academic bodies overseas have been holding various activities to commemorate the occasion. Among them are some who want to use this opportunity to push for a certain kind of mission to China. They offer all sorts of schemes, such as "Occupy China with the Gospel," "Gospelize China," etc., the real purpose of which is to negate and destroy the independence of the Chinese Church, in hopes of renewing their own control of the Chinese Church in their schemes to "split" and "Westernize." They prettify the Western missionary movement in every way they can, denying its colonial nature, producing their own way of looking at the missionary movement, the relationship of that movement to the Chinese Church, and other related issues. These are issues of great importance to the Church in China, issues which not only have an impact on an objective assessment of history, but on the future direction of the Chinese Church.

Learn from the past to serve the present. World Christian history and Chinese Christian history both repeatedly illustrate that the missionary movement has been used by colonizers and as a tool for foreign aggression and expansionism in China. There is no

debate about this. At the same time, this history brings clear recognition that without national sovereignty, a nation cannot be rich and strong and Christianity cannot experience sound development. Likewise, whether or not Christianity can be independent inevitably has an impact on the strength and security of the sovereign power of the nation. Thus the crucial issue here is the question of sovereignty. The presence or absence of independence and sovereignty is a fundamental standard by which a church should be assessed. This means we must have an awareness of sovereignty. If we lose this awareness, we may lose all sense of sovereignty and become “subjects of the sovereignty of others.” What is the point of speaking of the historical contribution of Christianity in such circumstances?

To restore the truth of history and to elucidate the independent three-self principle and stand that Chinese Christianity has maintained, it is important to foster greater understanding in academic and church circles at home and abroad of the ecclesiastical, theological and justice nature of three-self, its reasonableness and its necessity, and to provide a deeper and more systematic scholarly clarification of the three-self principle, so that the powerful Chinese voice may be heard in the world and more people will approach the three-self principle with an attitude of seeking truth from facts, accepting and propagating the three-self principle from the depths of their souls. If we can achieve this, then our “Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church” conference here in Shanghai will be significant indeed.

On the question of the treatment of individual missionaries, we have already reached a final conclusion in the document “Love Country, Love Church, Approach the New Century with One Heart: A Summing up of Fifty Years of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China.” I would like to underscore this now: We need to differentiate missionaries on the basis of their actions in the historical context. Any missionary who acted in ways beneficial to the Chinese people will not be forgotten.” We wish to

have an attitude of “facing history honestly and striving to open up the future.” We wish to relate to all churches, groups and academic bodies that respect the independence of the Chinese Church, have friendly exchanges and relations with them. We will do our utmost for the sake of peace and stability in the world and as a contribution to the construction of a harmonious world.

This symposium has met with an enthusiastic response from scholars and colleagues in and outside the church. Though we had but a short time to prepare, we received many positive responses to our invitation: Altogether over 30 papers. We will do our best to accommodate readings and comments by all scholars, and will compile and publish these contributions. In attendance today we have: representatives at the level of Deputy General Secretary and Deputy Secretary General and above of the TSPM and CCC; a co-worker from each province; seminary professors who are church historians and some faculty from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary; some scholars in the social sciences; the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee, leading comrades from the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council, and from the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the CPPCC. We would like to extend a warm welcome to all of them.

Confucius suggests that we make progress by tempering each other. I believe that the scholars and colleagues from the church here today, through an exchange of ideas, will certainly enable the fruits of the Three-Self Movement to be strengthened and deepened, taking us to a new era of maintaining our independence and running the church ourselves and enabling Chinese Christianity to make an even better contribution to the construction of a harmonious socialist society!

Presbyter Ji Jianhong served as Chair of the TSPM from May, 2002 to January, 2008.

*The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church* (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2007), 6-8.

## **Learn from History to Run the Church Well**

CAO SHENGJIE

### **The Manipulation of the Missionary Movement by Colonial Forces**

Christianity was a missionary religion from its inception. We can see this very clearly in Jesus' injunction before his ascension and from the Book of Acts. What we call the "missionary movement" refers to the movement to evangelize the world undertaken from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on, and especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, by the churches of Europe and America. The movement was related to the colonial expansion of Western nations. This is not a subjective judgment; it is a fact.

Once the nations of Europe controlled the seas, and particularly following the Industrial Revolution, the strong nations of the day—Portugal, Spain, Holland and later Britain—needed to find markets beyond their own shores. Their use of predatory trade practices to gain maximum profit meant they resorted to military and political force in order to expand overseas and establish colonies. It was during this historical period that foreign missions emerged. No matter how well-intentioned church leaders were in their hopes of bringing the gospel to the whole world, given the historical context, the forging of a link to colonialist forces was unavoidable. I would like to discuss the reasons for this.

### ***1. The impetus for foreign missions emerged from colonial expansion.***

A global missionary movement would have been impossible without colonial military might to pave the way. According to *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History*: “all mission activity benefited from [the exploits of] European colonialism and the renown of European civilization.”<sup>1</sup>

### ***2. The missionary movement was manipulated for the success of colonial expansion.***

The missionaries were deeply engaged in the colonies, providing a great deal of help to their suzerain countries. One foreign historian has said of the colonial movement in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that: “if they were not the pioneers who established empire (referring to the colonial empire), they were their companions.”<sup>2</sup> The early colonial enterprise seemed “to have deliberately, earnestly, and sincerely united with the missionary purpose. In many large undertakings, colonial officials seemed to be twin brothers to the missionaries. ... When they stepped onto the land, they would first prostrate themselves (referring to praying), then rise and throw themselves upon the natives (referring to massacring them).”<sup>3</sup>

I would like to quote from some of the Western missionaries’ writings to illustrate the ways in which the missionary movement was made to serve colonialism:

*In commerce.* It has been said that the missionaries were the frontline representatives of U.S. commerce; where the flag of commerce and trade waves today, the flag of the Prince of Peace was raised first; ....<sup>4</sup>

*Culturally.* U.S. Minister to China (1898) Edwin H. Conger said, “Our colleagues in the work of mission ... have always acted as the vanguard of western culture.”<sup>5</sup> Speer said, “It is their duty to gain people’s hearts,” “to remove from the minds of the majority of villagers the bad reputation that has become linked

with the concept of westerners;” the movement for cultural expansion needs the missionary enterprise, whose goals are three-fold: promote, support and reform the dissemination of culture.”<sup>6</sup>

*Intelligence gathering.* Lucian C. Warner of New York said that in Egypt, India, Ceylon, China and Japan, “I found that missionaries, in comparison to any other foreigners, were closer to and better understood the natives and were able to provide more dependable intelligence”<sup>7</sup>; during his presidency, Taft once said in a speech “Our primary source today for the condition of every people in the Far East is the foreign mission agencies.”<sup>8</sup>

*Maintaining Rule over Colonies.* A deputy-viceoy of New Guinea remarked that “because the missionary enterprise brings with it a sense of knowing one’s place and abiding by the law and maintenance of public order, missionaries aid the government and the government is happy to reciprocate.” In Natal, South Africa, General Sir Charles Warren said, “in maintaining peaceful intercourse between the colonizer and the native, the efficacy of a missionary is greater than that of a platoon of soldiers.”<sup>9</sup> The London Observer of July 21, 1900, carried an essay under the headline “Motive for the Massacre in the East” which said, “In China or India, if there are ten million Christians, these can act as an unpaid guard force protecting white Christians.”<sup>10</sup>

Missionaries have relied upon their knowledge of conditions in China and their facility in the language to help their countries conclude unequal treaties with China. For us Chinese Christians, these memories are still fresh. Gutzlaff and others, for example, helped to draft the first unequal treaty, the Treaty of Nanking, in which China was carved up and forced to pay reparations. Parker and Bridgman took part in drafting the Treaty of Wangxia between the US and China. This was the treaty which established “extraterritoriality.” W.A.P. Martin and Samuel Wells Williams inserted the “tolerance clause” into the Treaty of Tianjin between China and the US, China and England, such that even Chinese Christians came

within the purview of special protection, causing China's sovereignty to be dissipated, little by little. Nor was it unusual for missionaries to change their stripes and become diplomats or military officers. Parker and Leighton Stuart both served as officers and ambassadors of the U.S, Consul General in Shanghai. When the Eight Nation Alliance attacked, the Asbury Church, now the Chongwenmen Church, in Beijing became a military stronghold and the English missionary Frederick Brown put on a military uniform and served as an intelligence officer, guiding the invading forces from Tianjin to Beijing: all of these facts have been recorded in detail in these missionaries' own writings.<sup>11</sup>

### ***3. The missionary movement extended its support to colonialism out of its own need.***

For example, Gutzlaff and others early urged the use of military force to subdue China, in order for the evangelism to go forward. He said, "There is nothing else that will excite their respect for us like the iron-clad cannon."<sup>12</sup> And following the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, there was a chorus of approval from the foreign mission agencies, which felt that the opening of the gates of China was a "great good thing." They called upon Christians throughout the world to give thanks with one heart and praise God.<sup>13</sup> We can hardly imagine how heavily the ceding of territory and paying of indemnities weighed on the backs of the Chinese people. Chinese Christians are part of the Chinese people and will never forget this history of blood and tears.

### ***4. Similar histories were played out in other countries.***

Events which took place in China and Africa were repeated on almost every continent. After the missionaries, came the traders, and after them, the colonizers.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, program executive for Asia of the World Council of Churches, in his 2006 article "A Story of the Ecumenical Scenario in Asia," bases his argument on those of



the famous Indian historian K.M. Pannikar, who in his 1959 book *Asia and Western Rule*, wrote “in the process of Western colonial expansion, Christianity took the form of the missionary movement, and as luck would have it, the two converged.” “Above the ship carrying the colonial commander, flew a flag with an enormous cross; it had at the same time, cannon. It symbolized the entry of new power into the East.” Because Christianity and colonial rule were intertwined, Christianity was seen as the means by which Western forces established their political rule in Asia. Pannikar felt that the Western missionary movement caused the churches in the evangelized nations to lose themselves. This loss was expressed in several areas: the missionary’s sense of moral superiority; self-righteous exclusivism; a situation of political complexity caused by the links between the work of Christian mission and imperialist aggression, which brought about the unavoidable perception among those with nationalist leanings that the missionary movement was harmful to the interests of the nation.

Missionaries’ perhaps unconscious assertions of European superiority produced the opposite effect; the various denominations of Christianity with their mutual critiques and denunciations also harmed the work of mission. The areas Pannikar delineates led him to conclude that “The Christian missionary movement failed in Asia.”<sup>15</sup>

The various historical sources show that it is entirely correct to say that the missionary movement was manipulated by colonialism. As a participant in the Ecumenical Missionary Conference of 1900 said, “No mission station can avoid being a little colony, and if the colony does not have a missionary nature, then it has failed to grasp its opportunity or has not fulfilled its responsibility.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Setting the Missionary in the Larger Context of the Missionary Movement**

It is not the purpose of this symposium to evaluate Morrison or any other missionary, for the level of individual faith and piety,

evangelical enthusiasm, moral attainments, knowledge of the missionary's native culture, the attitudes of its people and the person's standing in the mission enterprise all differ. In the early Three-Self Movement, missionaries were all identified as imperialist elements; no distinctions were made. This is an extreme, erroneous view.

This view was rethought and revised in the summing up on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Both Morrison and Gutzlaff, for example, were employed by the East India Company, but in the matter of direct purveying of opium, Gutzlaff was much more active. The Chinese Church has always affirmed Morrison and held him in high esteem for his translation of the Bible, his contribution to the introduction of the Bible to China, his editorship of the English-Chinese Dictionary (*Yinghua zidian*), and his contribution to forging links between the cultures of East and West. However, willingly or not, he did after all serve as a high officer of the East India Company, the company with a monopoly on the opium trade, which he served for 25 years, thus linking the ministry of spreading Christianity in China to the trade in opium. This we can never condone.

In recent years, a great many books have been published both in China and overseas extolling the contributions of foreign missionaries to China. In our summing up at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, we clearly stated that "we should make distinctions among foreign missionaries based on their behavior in the historical context. We will not forget any of those whose actions resulted in benefit to the Chinese people."<sup>17</sup>

We esteem those missionaries who left their own backgrounds to come to China, their spirit of patient suffering to spread the gospel. Some of them did much good for the people. Those who went to remote areas, for example, shared weal and woe with the people of the place, and raised the economic and cultural level where they were. During the war, some acted without regard for their own safety in order to protect the local people. These the

Chinese people will always remember.

To know the missionaries, we must set them within the larger context of the missionary movement. In general, being educated in the colonialist nations of the day, the missionaries were formed and grew in an atmosphere that accepted the missionary movement. It would have been difficult for them to completely shed the central intellectual concerns of Western culture. Thus, many, though they had no expectation of serving colonialism, found that objectively it was very difficult to avoid such a result. As they evangelized with enthusiasm, they were also spreading the word that “Western countries are rich and powerful because they believe in (the Christian) God,” and attributed the invasion of China, the humiliation of her people and their subsequent poverty and suffering to the fact that they did not believe in (this) God, glossing over the crime of imperialist aggression. It was natural for them to demand that Chinese Christians embrace all of Western culture along with their Christian faith, to the extent that when foreign forces invaded China, Chinese Christians were mobilized to protect their foreign brothers on the basis of their shared faith. This is why we feel that we cannot simply be grateful for all the missionaries did, without making distinctions among them.

### **The Negative Impact of the Missionary Movement on the Chinese Church**

Because the missionary movement was used by colonialism, its negative effects on the Chinese Church were quite serious:

1. The Chinese Church was a mission field for foreign mission agencies. In the language of the resolution passed at the Centenary Conference of Protestant Missions, it was “the church in China” and not a true Chinese Church. At the 1922 National Christian Conference, the famous Chinese Christian leader Cheng Jingyi said, “The present church is still under the control of foreigners.”<sup>18</sup> The Chinese Church was not a sovereign church. Denominations

proliferated in Chinese Christianity at the time, and denominations split on the basis of mission agencies from different countries. The Anglican (Episcopal) Church for example was under agencies from three countries: England, the U.S., and Canada. The English section had two different mission agencies. The American Baptist Church was split into Southern Baptists and Northern Baptists as a result of the American Civil War. These agencies worked in different areas of China and carved out their own spheres of influence.

Every church in China belonged to a different “mother church”; the situation was like that in the foreign concessions in former times. In response to the national awakening in China, calls for self-determination rose in the church and some foreign mission agencies took concerted action, reorganizing and adding “China” to their names. The Anglican Church, for example changed its name to the Zhonghua Shenggong hui in 1912, but power remained in the hands of the foreign agency. From 1918-1949, 14 Chinese bishops were consecrated, but 9 were only assistant bishops. Only in 1947 did the chair of the House of Bishops become a Chinese position.

2. Conservative theological thinking caused Chinese Christians to think of themselves only as citizens of “Heaven,” as “brothers and sisters” of foreign Christians, while their non-Christian compatriots became “Gentiles” in their eyes, creating a gulf between Christians and other Chinese.

The old phrase was “One more Christian means one less Chinese.” Strictly speaking this is inaccurate, because not all Chinese lost their patriotic love of country, and many expressed it very courageously. But there was widespread evidence for the accuracy of the phrase as well. The “tolerance clause” gave rise to a “nation within a nation,” and when foreign soldiers invaded, Chinese Christians stood with the aggressors. How tragic this was.

3. Christian culture was equated with Western culture, from whence came the call to “occupy China” and reform Chinese cul-

ture. In 1922 the foreign mission agencies published a survey of Chinese Christianity. The Chinese title of this book was *China for Christ* (Zhonghua gui zhu), while the English title was *The Christian Occupation of China*. Such strong, patronizing language naturally met with revulsion among patriotic Chinese.

We are filled with gratitude for the entry of Christianity into China, we thank God for his great mercy, for mission is “*missio Dei*,”<sup>19</sup> God’s mission.” Any church is but a participant (in God’s mission) and cannot preach a particular church, let alone a particular person. All blessing comes from God. Anyone who genuinely wishes to spread the gospel should return all glory to God, and continually reflect on whether the light of the gospel is being obscured by human failings.

Some Western missionaries did indeed ponder this, for example the English missionary David MacDonald Paton in his 1953 work, *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God*, reprinted in the U.S. in 1994. Bishop K.H. Ting praised his “prophetic vision” as laying the groundwork for the emergence and growth of a new missiology.<sup>20</sup> We want to join with persons in the churches of the West, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, in seeking to do well the work of spreading the gospel in every place.

Of course we do not deny that the mission movement also brought advanced Western culture, technology and other benefits, and in this sense propelled an East-West cultural exchange. Even today we need to learn from all beneficial knowledge and technology from abroad. But we must also look at the motivation for mission-run cultural enterprises at that time:

1) *To complement evangelization.* Church-run schools all held classes in religious doctrine, to persuade students to believe. Cultural enterprises were part of the missionary enterprise.

2) *To foster people able to serve them.* This included persons of talent who would work directly for the church as well as those who would serve in society, but would benefit their pur-

poses. According to American missionary Calvin W. Mateer, this was more important than evangelism.

The role of a true Christian school does not lie solely in teaching religion and thereby causing students to be baptized into the church. Their vision goes further than this. They wish to train their students in knowledge to be persons of influence in society and in the church, to function as guides and leaders for ordinary people.<sup>21</sup>

The famous English missionary Timothy Richard put it even more incisively in an 1899 letter to the British Consul in Shanghai, Mr. Brennan:

Thousands of students are studying in these (American) schools and many of them will assume leadership positions in the Chinese government . . . by grasping these organizations and leaders of Chinese religious circles, we are grasping Chinese minds and sinew.<sup>22</sup>

This is why they did not advocate, that students to engage in anti-imperialist activities, but forbade it. These schools also produced talented individuals who made contributions to the nation, but the main reason for this is that these individuals, faced with the cruel facts of imperialism in their own nation, were led by their own patriotic consciences and did not entirely fall in with the hidden agendas of those who ran the schools.

3) *Using Western culture to reform and occupy China.* As Edmond J. James, president of the University of Illinois, wrote in a 1906 memorandum to President Roosevelt: “Money spent to enlarge the impact of the spiritual, even in material terms will bring a greater harvest than other methods.”<sup>23</sup> Cultural enterprises such as church-run schools made their contribution to China, but many of these contributions bore a price—the sacrifice of Chinese national interests and culture—a very heavy price. The Chinese

Church was a participant in these events; Chinese Christians have personal experience of them. For us and for the church the price was heavy indeed.

The harm caused to the Chinese people by the unequal treaties of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the frequent missionary cases, the rising waves of anti-imperialism and anti-religion (Christianity) culminated in the Boxer Rebellion. In the prevailing circumstances of the day, those who urged anti-imperialism were not able to entirely distinguish Christianity from the forces of colonialism, much less those Chinese Christians who, due to the influence of an erroneous theology, mistakenly stood with the foreign missionaries. It is one of the tragedies of history that they became the innocent and expendable victims of the sharp conflict. This causes us much distress. The anti-Christian movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was in essence one of patriotic Chinese resisting imperialist use of Christianity as a tool of aggression against China. "Anti-Christian" meant "anti-imperialism," but it was Christianity that suffered severe attacks in the event.

The independence movement in the church, the efforts at indigenization all came about because patriotic Christians saw that the missionary movement was indeed being manipulated by colonialism, harming the nation, and having an impact on the existence and development of Chinese Christianity, and their sense that what was needed was for Chinese Christians themselves to take up their historical task. Yet, because China was at that time a colony oppressed by imperialism, the independence movement in the church had to struggle against repression by the "foreign religion," and was unable to play the role it should have. As for indigenization, overall the church could not free itself of mission agency control. Though some improvements were made with a move toward sinicization in the areas of theology, church music, art, and architecture, many of the most basic demands were not realized.

New China was established in 1949 as an independent na-

tion. Conditions then were excellent for the building up of a Chinese Church. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement was a response to historical necessity, and since its inception it has worked to change the “foreign” face of Christianity in China. In the last fifty years, the development of Chinese Christianity has surpassed what the mission agencies achieved in over 100 years of effort. Not only has the number of Christians greatly increased (even incomplete statistics put the number (of Protestants) at 16 million, 20 times greater than the 1949 total of 700,000); the barriers of denominations have been thrown down: and we have entered an era of post-denominationalism and unity, of love for country and love for church, and have become a positive force in building a socialist society.

Even more precious, the image of Christianity in Chinese society has undergone a fundamental transformation. We have been accepted as a Christian church built on a premise of Chinese selfhood. Many intellectuals and young people have come of their own accord to accept the faith. This is extremely encouraging for the future development of Christianity.

### **Lessons the Chinese Church Should Draw**

The TSPM has been active for over fifty years, during which the basic goals of “self-government, self-support, and self-propagation” have been realized in the Chinese Church. Is it still necessary then to discuss the historical background? Our primary purpose in holding this symposium is to seek what lessons we can from the past: history should be our mirror, that we may better run the Chinese Church in future. This has both academic and practical significance.

There are four primary lessons for us here:

1. A church must be independently run by the Christians of its own nation. The sovereignty of the church must be in the hands of the nation’s Christians whose awareness encompasses love for country and love for church. Only in such circumstances will a church be free of foreign manipulation.



The missionary movement was launched by churches run by their own believers, and there was no question of where sovereignty lay. But the mission fields in those days were colonies or semi-colonies whose churches were controlled by foreign mission agencies. Sovereignty did not lie in the hands of the local Christians. As colonies gained their independence, the churches naturally demanded the return of church sovereignty and independent management. Their efforts were part and parcel of national independence.

Today as globalization is increasingly a reality in our world, some countries' demands for maintaining self-determination are called nationalist and considered outmoded. We feel that globalization does not mean the end of separate nations with conflicting interests that are at times exacerbated. The former president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Schmidt, felt that globalization has caused a weakening of sovereignty in governments and parliaments... clearly leading to a weakening of the economic power of governments."<sup>24</sup>

We seek a harmonious world where each nation and each people coexist peacefully and various interests can be appropriately dealt with, where globalization will not be an excuse for one nation to interfere in the affairs of another, or threaten its sovereignty. As long as the demand for an independent and sovereign nation does not impinge on the interests of other countries, it is an unalterable demand for equality, not to be equated with a narrow nationalism.

The church is a fellowship of all Christian believers in every time and place and is therefore universal in nature. It is given specific shape by churches located in a specific place. Christians are of different nationalities and have different national interests. The local nature of the church is a reality. Today, we still attach importance to the universality of the church, and its practical significance is that we cannot isolate ourselves. We need contact with other

churches in other countries and should learn from their beneficial experience. We may discuss issues of mutual concern with them. But universality cannot become an excuse for putting an end to the particularity of churches or threatening the sovereignty of a church in its own country. If a church loses its sovereignty, that would mean a return to the old path of the missionary movement—a return to dependency on foreign churches. More serious is that a church may then be used by foreign forces to threaten its own people, creating discord and disunity between the church and the people of its nation. This is a great misfortune for the nation and for the church.

China is already an independent and sovereign nation and increasingly strong. Chinese Christianity, too, has regained its sovereignty. The situation that arose with the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement will not repeat itself. But attention should be paid to the fact that the old mission idea of attempting to use evangelism to “occupy China” still exists. Hostile foreign forces, on the pretext of using Christian evangelism to realize the “Great Commission,”<sup>25</sup> are still involved in activities to infiltrate China. At present there are church groups overseas who are planning, with the support of foreign forces hostile to China, to intensify their activities in China, including clandestine missionary activities. They seek to expand their influence through personnel who obtain a lawful status in China, and through finance and publishing. Whether their activities are clandestine or carried out under the guise of lawful behavior, their goal is to control the Chinese Church. They intend to act according to the wishes of outside forces, even to the point of setting our church on a course of opposition to our society and government. This is a very serious challenge for us.

2. In terms of religion’s significance as part of culture, Christianity must make great efforts in theological reconstruction, to enable Chinese Christian theology to be compatible with China’s advanced culture and to fulfill its positive function in our harmonious culture.

In addition to causing a loss of sovereignty, the missionary movement harmed Chinese Christianity by harm done to its thinking, including its theology, spreading a great deal of escapist consciousness that distanced it from the people of its own nation. Today Chinese Christianity is facing difficulties on two fronts in cultural terms.

One concerns theological thinking within the church that is in large part modeled on conservative Western theology; stressing, for example, that there is no hope in this world; separation of reason and faith, of the life of the spirit and everyday life; and stressing the negative aspects of eschatology, such that Christians find it difficult to accommodate themselves to socialist society.

The second is concerned with society. Some in the church are concerned only with personal salvation, and are indifferent toward social development, social justice, social service; stressing in particular Christian exclusivism and a lack of respect for the faith of others, seeing all non-Christians as another order of being, which affects social unity. In the past few years, we have been striving to change this kind of Christian consciousness through theological reconstruction. But at the grass roots, the influence of the old thinking still exists to a certain degree.

At present, in the process of building a harmonious society, there is greater space for Christianity to realize its potential in its nation and society. The Party and the State encourage us to “realize the potential of religion to play a positive role in promoting social harmony.” At home and abroad there are people who urgently hope that Christianity will play a greater role in Chinese society.

We should indeed strive to realize our potential; the question is, what role shall we play? Some foreign friends say that Christianity came from the West, so it can help Chinese society to be more democratic and capitalist (market economy). They want to have Western economic, democratic and political concepts spread

more generally in China through Christianity. This is clearly not what is called for to achieve a Chinese harmonious culture.

Over a long period of development in Europe, Christianity became closely joined to Western culture. This much is fact. Yet, Christianity is, after all, a universal religious faith; it cannot be equated to Western culture. Just as over one hundred years ago, Chen Mengnan, a Chinese Christian with a strong national consciousness, said: "The way of Christianity is the way of Heaven; in other countries it is part of those cultures; but in China, it is Chinese,"<sup>26</sup> In coming to China, Christianity must put down roots here.

Y.T. Wu said, "Christians in China must discover for themselves the treasures of Jesus' gospel, they must cast off the shackles of Western theology, abolish escapist thinking and create the Chinese church's own system of theology."<sup>27</sup> We must remove from our theology anything from Western consciousness that is not beneficial to a harmonious society in China and build our own Chinese Church's theological framework. We must not equate Christianity with Western culture.

We are not culturally exclusive. There is much in Western culture that is of benefit to us and from which we can learn. The issue is that we must discern for ourselves what to absorb and what to discard based on our own needs, rather than just "take whatever is given" without demur.

The goal of a harmonious culture requires us to promote unity, including intra-Christian unity, unity between Christians and non-Christians, and unity between Christians and those who profess other faiths. In the West, there is "dialogue" among the various faiths and we should try this in China as well. It would not only be of benefit to our nation and people, but to the church itself. It would enable the church to learn to respect other religious faiths, and clarify our own position. It would clarify for us our own strengths and weaknesses and we would be stronger for it.

3. Christianity should preach a “Gospel of peace.” Missionary methods should in no way violate what is contained in the gospel.

The greatest failure of the missionary movement was that under the guise of evangelism, of bringing the gospel to people, the missionaries also brought pillage and humiliation upon the peoples of the nations they evangelized because they were themselves manipulated by colonialism. The reason the mission agencies of the day could do this with easy hearts was because of a guiding ideology which believed that spreading the gospel justified any means, including the sale of opium, wars of aggression, unequal treaties—whatever would open the gates of China to the gospel. But how would people willingly accept a “gospel” that meant for them loss of territory and harm from missionary cases? How could the minority who accepted the perks that came from church-run cultural enterprises avoid being satirized as “rice Christians?”

We very much understand that there are many Christians overseas with a pious faith, who, like the missionaries of the past, love the souls of the Chinese people and have an admirable desire to spread the gospel. They have, however, no understanding at all of the circumstances of development in China. They have, in fact, a great many mistaken ideas—how then can they know anything of the true needs of the Chinese people? We truly hope that they will listen conscientiously to the analyses of the missionary movement by Chinese Christians, based on historical fact; that they will conscientiously reflect on what paths will genuinely help Chinese people know the truth of the gospel; and that they will adopt appropriate means, means which respect the three-self principle of Chinese Christianity and support its ministry, rather than engaging in illegal activities with a “whatever it takes” attitude to spread the gospel.

4. The future of Chinese Christianity lies in developing a “selfhood,” in firmly following its own path and putting down roots

in the soil of its own nation, while at the same time actively initiating exchanges with churches outside, absorbing what will nurture and build a Chinese Church suitable to China's social development and will also make a contribution to the church ecumenical.

Since the inception of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, Chinese Christianity has broken out of certain constraints imposed by the missionary movement. Organizationally, we no longer follow the Western model of denominations. Theologically, we have begun to reflect on ways to adapt to socially advanced patterns of thinking. But it should be said that our progress here still lags behind social demand. If we do not redouble our efforts along the proper direction towards construction, toward a more open form, some of the old missionary concepts and ideas of denominationalism, or theological thinking that stands against social development, will easily gain ground under the guise of "loyalty to tradition."

Christianity indeed possesses faith traditions that have come down to us from apostolic times (in English, the Tradition). We must hold fast to these, but there are also historical accretions appropriate to Western social development (the tradition) which we need not take on.

The way forward for Chinese Christianity is that it must put down roots in Chinese soil and be accepted by the great masses of the Chinese people. When they recognize Christianity as a necessary and active force in social construction, they will be able to hear the answer of faith Christianity offers to the question of human meaning posed by the challenges of an era of transition.

Within world Christianity, churches and theologians of every nation are reflecting on the tides of globalization, and the challenges of postmodernism which face them. Some understand development as "a symbol of the advent of the end times." They think the only task of the church is to strengthen evangelism, to "save souls." Others think that the church should welcome the challenges of development, redouble its efforts in the world, and bring about

peace, tolerance, and justice in the world. The Chinese Church must be good at discernment and choose to adopt those theological and ethical proposals which are of genuine benefit to us, based on our own needs. We should strengthen links and exchanges with churches the world over and build a Chinese Church which will be welcomed with joy by the people and by God alike.

Recently, Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, visited China. In the various places he visited here, he had high praise for our efforts to ground the Chinese Church in Chinese soil. In his view, the missionary movement could be compared to those who put a plant into a pot. The plant cannot put down roots there. But now the pot has been broken and Chinese Christianity is able to put down roots among the Chinese people and accomplish things, such as “post-denominationalism,” that other churches have not been able to accomplish.<sup>28</sup> Bishop K.H. Ting has said, “. . . the church takes root in all cultures, gives off a brilliance which stirs the hearts of men and thereby greatly enriches the treasury of the universal church.”<sup>29</sup> The Chinese Church will not only create a gospel for the people of China, but will make its own contribution to the universal church.

Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie was President of the China Christian Council, May, 2002-January, 2008.

*The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church* (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2007), 9-24.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1971) 559.

<sup>2</sup> James S. Dennis, *The Modern Call of Missions: Studies in some of the larger aspects of a great enterprise* (Revell, 1913) 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>4</sup> James Barton, *The Missionary & His Critics* (Revell, 1906) 25, 58-59, 122.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>6</sup> Robert E. Speer, *Christianity and the Nations* (Layman's Missionary Movement, 1910) 35, 376-377.

<sup>7</sup> *The Missionary & His Critics*, 57.

<sup>8</sup> Barton *The Gospel and the New World*, 94.

<sup>9</sup> Barton, *The Missionary & His Critics*, 136, 140.

<sup>10</sup> Dennis, *The Modern Call of Missions*, 34.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Henderson Smith, *China in Convulsion* (Fleming Revell, 1901), Frederick Brown, *From Tientsin to Peking with the Allied Forces*.

<sup>12</sup> Wu Yixiong, *Between religion and the secular world: A study of early Protestant missionary activity along the south China coast* (in Chinese) (Guangzhou: Guangdong Education Press, 2000) 151.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895* (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), vol. 2, 484. Quoted in Luo Guanzong, *Remembering the past as a lesson for the future* (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2003), 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900: report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, held in Carnegie Hall and neighboring churches, April 21 to May 1, vol. 1, 327.

<sup>15</sup> Mathews George Chunakara, "A Story of the Ecumenical Scenario in Asia," *Bulletin of Theological Concerns*. Christian Conference of Asia (vol. 22, No. 2, 2006): 66.

<sup>16</sup> Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900 : report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, held in Carnegie Hall and neighboring churches, April 21 to May 1, vol. 1, 327.

<sup>17</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> anniv. (Shanghai: CCC/TSPM, 2000), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *Remembering the past as a lesson for the future*, 161.

<sup>19</sup> This term was used at the 1950 International Missionary Council. In theological terms, it illustrates, through the internal relationship of the Triune God, that mission is God's sending.

<sup>20</sup> K.H. Ting, "Foreword to the New Edition of *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God*," in *Love Never Ends* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 446.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the 1890 Convention of China Missionaries, 473.

<sup>22</sup> Liu Danian, *A History of American Aggression in China*, 85-86, quoted in *Remembering the past as a lesson for the future*, 475.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 474.



<sup>24</sup> Helmut Schmidt, *Globalization and Moral Reconstruction*, Chai Fangguo trans. (Beijing: CASS, 2001) 15-16.

<sup>25</sup> Matt. 28: 18-20, where Jesus instructs the disciples to make believers of all nations.

<sup>26</sup> Cao Shengjie, “The (Christian) Independence Movement and Indigenization,” in *Remembering the past as a lesson for the future*, 139.

<sup>27</sup> Y.T. Wu, *A New Stage in the Christian Reform Movement*, quoted in *Documents of the Chinese Three-Self Patriotic Movement: 1950-1992*, 22-23.

<sup>28</sup> Chen Meilin, “He wholeheartedly supports the Three-Self path of the Chinese Church,” in *Tian Feng*, January, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> K.H. Ting, “Another Look at Three-Self,” in *Love Never Ends*, 318.

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