

Chinese Theological Review 1987

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Preface

Many of the reports from the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference held in Shanghai, August, 1986, which form the bulk of the essays included in *The Chinese Theological Review: 1987* contain descriptions of ongoing efforts at broadening the unity of the post-denominational Chinese Protestant church. All Christians who see themselves as *Chinese* Christians are welcomed into this unity. These very concrete reflections remind us that unity is a process, to be achieved through give-and-take. It can never be an imposed uniformity, a distinction which is drawn by several authors.

At the same time, the Protestant church in China seeks to deepen the nature of the unity it enjoys. Several authors are concerned with the need for reconciliation as a means to a more thorough-going unity. "Seek the common ground while reserving differences" is a phrase which echoes through these discussions. Reconciliation aims to resolve social as well as theological or liturgical differences: to heal the wounds of the Cultural Revolution and to embrace and facilitate a variety of liturgical practices.

Five of the twenty-one authors included in this issue - Gao Ying, Jiang Peifen, Peng Cui'an, Wang Zhu and Wu Ai'en - are women. Young, middle-aged and old, clergy and lay, they reflect the rich and varied experience women bring to the Christian community. Jiang Peifen's article on women and evangelism in the church provides further insight into the role of women in the Protestant church of China today.

It is a particular pleasure to include this year selections from *Lilies of the Field*, a book of devotions by Wang Weifan, who teaches at Nanjing Theological Seminary. Many of us have prayed for the church in China; a month's worth of Rev. Wang's devotions have been chosen as an invitation to join *with* Chinese Christians in prayer.

For the first time, two essays from the Catholic Church in China have been included in *The Chinese Theological Review*. I would like to express particular thanks to Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian and Fr. Lu Xuedi for generously allowing their work to be published in this *Review*.

The contents of the 1987 volume have been selected from *Collected Documents of the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference*, a joint publication of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee; the *Nanjing Theological Review*, the journal of Nanjing Theological Seminary; *Tian Feng*, a monthly published by the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee; *Sermon Series*, published by the Zhejiang Christian Council; *A Compendium of Catholic Research Materials* published by the Guangqi Society in Shanghai; and the book *Lilies of the Field*. All materials have been selected by the editor with the assistance of Philip L. Wickeri. Though an effort is made to include church documents and important statements, the contents do not reflect any attempt to be comprehensive.

Pinyin romanization has been used throughout except where another form is more familiar or, in the case of names, is known to be a personal preference. All Biblical quotations follow the Revised Standard Version. A brief identification of the authors will be found at the back of the book. Translators are listed following each article, except in cases where the article was written in English.

I would like to express my thanks to the authors of the articles and sermons presented here for generously consenting to share their work with us and for their enthusiastic support for this *Review*. Any errors are, of course, the responsibility of the editor.

I would also like to thank Marvin Hoff and Joanne Hoff of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia for their encouragement and assistance in producing the *Review* each year. Special thanks are due to the translators: Peter Barry, Ewing W. Carroll, Jr., William Dockery, Jill Hughes, Lucy T.H. Loh, Donald MacInnis, Craig Moran, Philip L. Wickeri and Jean Woo. I am grateful to Diane Allen, Robert Dayton and Britt J. Towery who read and made suggestions for improving the manuscript, and to Eva Lai Woon Ching who typed and proofread the volume and managed to remain in good humor throughout.

Janice K. Wickeri

1. The Constitution of the China Christian Council

Article I This Council shall be known as the China Christian Council.

Article II This council serves as the organization which deals with the affairs of the Chinese church on a national basis. It has the following aims: To unite all Christians throughout the country who believe in the heavenly Father and who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord in effectively administering the Chinese independent, autonomous, self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the Scriptures, working in full cooperation and with unity of purpose.

Article III This council exalts Christ and his Cross, unites all the churches in China in joint action to multiply the activities of Christ's members, and builds up the Body of Christ, so as to bear a good witness to the Gospel of Christ and provide service for the tasks undertaken by the entire Chinese church. It advocates mutual respect in matters of faith, and the principle of "forbearing one another in love, giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" in the relationship between the members.

Article IV This council promotes the tasks of theological education and the publication of literature undertaken by the Chinese church, arranges the exchange of information between local churches on organizational and administrative matters, promotes the interchange of views on the work of the churches, and develops friendly relations with overseas churches.

Article V The supreme authority for this council shall be the National Chinese Christian Conference. The relationship between this council and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement is one of cooperation and differentiation of function, which will involve at set periods cooperating with that Movement in the convening of the National Conference and, when need arises, cooperating with that Movement in convening other joint meetings.

Article VI The full committee of this Council has its source in elections taking place at the National Conference, and its members shall serve until the next meeting of the National Conference, with re-election involving a further period of service.

Article VII This council shall appoint a president, a number of vice-presidents, and a general secretary, together with a number of standing committee members, all of whom shall be elected by the full committee of this council. In addition, this council shall appoint a number of consultants.

Article VIII This council shall appoint a standing committee consisting of the president, the vice-presidents, the general secretary and the members of the standing committee, which shall deal with business when the full committee is not in session. When necessary, the standing committee may propose to the full committee names for co-option or withdrawal.

Article IX The National Conference of the Chinese Church shall meet once in every five years, but when need arises, it may be called at an earlier or a later date.. The names of the delegates and the method for their selection shall be decided through joint consideration by the two standing committees of this council and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement. The full committee of this council shall meet once in every two years, but when need arises, it may be called at an earlier or a later date. The standing committee shall meet annually, but when need arises, it may meet less or more frequently.

Article X This council shall appoint a number of deputy general secretaries, following nomination by the general secretary, and they shall serve in accordance with the decision of the standing committee.

Article XI In accordance with the requirements of the work, this council shall appoint working-parties and other specialized committees.

Article XII The standing committee shall be responsible for raising funds for this council.

Article XIII This council is to be based in Shanghai.

Article XIV This constitution takes effect when it has been approved by the National Conference of the Chinese church, and is subject to revision by that Conference.

Collected Documents of the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference (China Christian Council and Three-Self Movement Committee: Shanghai, 1986), p.43. Reprinted from The China Study Project Journal, Vol. 2, No. 1 (April, 1987), p.49, by permission.

2. The Constitution of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement

Article I This Committee shall be known as the committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

Article II This committee serves as the patriotic and church-loving organization of Chinese Christians. It has the following aims and functions: Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government, to unite Christians throughout the country in their love for the fatherland, in observing the country's constitution and its laws, in upholding self-government, self-support and self-propagation as the guiding principles for the independent, autonomous church, and in safeguarding and augmenting the achievements of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement; to cooperate with the Government in implementing the policy of freedom of religious belief; to develop friendly international contacts; and to achieve national unity with a view to ensuring that China is established as a highly democratic, highly civilized, and modernized, strong nation, contributing its resources to the maintenance of world peace.

Article III The supreme authority for this committee shall be the National Conference of the Chinese Christian church. The relationship between this committee and the China Christian Council is one of cooperation and differentiation of function, which will involve at set periods cooperating with the China Christian Council in the convening of the National Conference, and when need arises, cooperating with the China Christian Council in convening other joint meetings.

Article IV The committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement has its source in elections taking place at the National Conference, and its members shall serve until the next meeting of the National Conference, with re-election involving a further period of service.

Article V This committee shall appoint a chairman, a number of deputy-chairmen, and a secretary-general, together with a number of members serving as the Standing Committee, all the above to be elected by this committee. In addition this committee shall appoint a number of consultants.

Article VI The chairman, the deputy-chairman, the secretary-general, and the members of the stand-in session, business shall be dealt with by the standing committee. When necessary, the standing committee may propose to the full committee names for co-option or withdrawal.

Article VII The committee shall appoint a number of deputy secretaries-general, following nomination by the secretary-general, and they shall serve in accordance with the decision of the standing committee.

Article VIII In accordance with the requirements of the work, this committee shall appoint working-parties and other specialized committees.

Article IX The National Conference of the Chinese Christian church shall meet once in every five years, but when need arises, it may be called at an earlier or later date. The names of the delegates and the method for their selection shall be decided through joint consideration by the two standing committees of this committee and the China Christian Council. This committee shall meet once in every two years, but when need arises, it may be called at an earlier or a later date. The standing committee shall meet annually, but when need arises, it may meet less or more frequently.

Article X The standing committee shall be responsible for raising funds for this committee.

Article XI This committee is to be based in Shanghai.

Article XII This constitution takes effect when it has been approved by the National Chinese Christian Conference, and is subject to revision by that Conference.

Collected Documents of the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, p. 41. Reprinted from The China Study Project Journal, Vol.2, No. 1 (April, 1987), p.48, by permission.

ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES

3. On the Revision of the Constitutions – Wu Gaozi

I represent the Committee for the Revision of the Constitutions which was set up by the Standing Committees of the two national Christian organizations, so that I may offer you all a short explanation of the draft revised constitutions of those organizations.

Ever since the last meeting of the Conference in 1980, there has been considerable growth in the work of the two Christian organizations, and this has been attended with great success. During this period, the situation both within and without these organizations has undergone a welcome change. In order to cope with the needs that have arisen from a growth in our work, it has been necessary to make certain essential revisions in the constitutions. In the course of this revision, we have received the support of many of our fellow Christians, who have made valuable suggestions, and I can sincerely express the thanks of the whole Committee.

Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the Three-Self Movement:

1. In the Second Article it is proposed that "anti-imperialist patriotic organization of the Chinese church" be altered to "patriotic and church-loving organization of Chinese Christians." This is because for a long time patriotism and love for the Church have become the specific practice and the good witness of the pastors and the lay people in the church, and in any case, patriotism and love for the church involve anti-imperialism. For this reason the revised constitution clearly points out that the Three-Self Movement is the patriotic and church-loving organization of Chinese Christians, which implies the ideas of anti-imperialism and patriotism, which is in accordance with the facts.

2. The Second Article included functions as well as aims, so it is proposed that "and functions" should be added after "aims."

3. The functions mentioned in the Second Article included "safeguarding the achievements of the Three-Self Movement." It is proposed that the words "and augmenting" be inserted after "safeguarding."

4. For Chinese Christians the maintenance of independence and autonomy has as its aim the establishment of a church with Chinese characteristics, and is not anti-foreign. During these past few years the Three-Self Movement has been very successful in developing friendly international relations, and for this reason the addition of the words "to develop friendly international relations" would ensure that this sphere of activity would receive more widespread recognition.

The history of the Three-Self Movement during the past thirty years provides evidence that this movement is God's will. It has enabled the Chinese church to cast aside the support of foreign missionary societies. It has corrected the guise of "foreign religion" which Christianity had assumed; it has helped Chinese Christians to increase their national self-

respect; and it has impelled the Chinese church into becoming a member of the world-wide church on terms of equality. The Three-Self Movement has achieved great results, so we must safeguard it and develop it. The Chinese church must advance from being a self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating independent church into one which does all these things more effectively. And so, where the building up of the church is concerned, there is still a great deal of work to be done.

In the present atmosphere of reform, we must more effectively encourage the mass of Christians in establishing the Four Modernizations, and must enable them to contribute their own efforts towards the two cultures. On the basis of the success that has already been achieved we must ensure that the Three-Self Movement makes further progress.

The following proposals are made for revising the constitution of the China Christian Council:

1. To combine the nature of the Council set out in the Second Article with its aims, and to include the words "the organization which deals with the affairs of the Chinese church on a national basis" in the Second Article, slightly altering the text concerning the aims of the Council.

The Council's obligation to unite all Christians throughout the country lays emphasis on the fact that those whom we wish to unite are all Chinese Christians and not simply some of them.

To the original sentence "to administer effectively the Chinese self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating church" we propose to add the words "independent, autonomous." This is in order to emphasize that the duty we have to perform, and the church which we administer, have been thoroughly penetrated by the spirit of Three-Self.

2. To alter the Third Article of the earlier constitution of the CCC by amplifying it. It is proposed that we add the words "exalts Christ and his Cross, unites all the churches in China in joint action to multiply the activities of Christ's members, and builds up the Body of Christ, so as to bear a good witness to the Gospel of Christ." This is in order to make explicit the fact that the purpose of the Council in providing service is the building up of the church.

The proposed revised draft retains the wording of the original in its sentence concerning mutual respect. The thirty-year history of the Three-Self Movement proves that Christians with dissimilar denominational backgrounds and differing theological outlooks are able to unite on the basis of emphasizing major points of unity while retaining minor differences. Amongst us there are still "differences," but still greater is our "unity." Because these "differences" exist, we must have mutual respect, but even more does mutual respect have its place because we have "unity." From now on, we must develop still further our experience of mutual respect.

3. In the original constitution there is no clear provision regarding the work of the Council, and so with a view to meeting the needs for the present and future expansion of the

Council's work, it is proposed that a separate article be added to deal more fully with this work. Hence the present wording of the Fourth Article. This important expansion clarifies the future direction of the main functions and efforts of the CCC.

The effective administration of Chinese theological education is the lifeline of the Chinese church. How can we ensure a future generation of leaders of our church? How can we best administer theological colleges which manifest genuine life? How can we establish our own system of theological thought and of theological education? All these problems require the cooperation of the CCC with local theological colleges as they strive together to make further progress.

During the past few years there has been considerable development in the production of Christian literature, but when this is objectively considered in the light of our requirements, we still have a long way to go before we satisfy the needs of the Christian community, so we must ensure that it is more vigorously promoted.

The promotion of the flow of information regarding the work of the church will have the effect of providing a positive impetus towards strengthening the confidence of Christians in their task. The importance of developing friendly relations with churches in other countries has already been touched upon, so we need not add more.

In addition, a few alterations are proposed regarding the constitutions of the two organizations:

1. To show consideration for the health of those elderly and infirm leaders in our two organizations, as well as allowing our younger colleagues gradually to assume positions of leadership, the revised constitutions of the two organizations have a regulation to the effect that a number of consultants should be appointed. Allowing our aged and infirm leaders to take up positions as consultants would not only show consideration for their health, but would also enable them to continue to make their contribution in the future. In the past, the success of our two organizations has been inseparable from the efforts of our senior colleagues. Many of these senior members are also greatly interested in the maturing of their younger colleagues. This arrangement is not only in accord with the requirements of future growth, but is also in accord with the aspirations of the aged.

2. In accordance with the practical experience of the past six years, we have proposed to the Conference a number of changes in the frequency with which meetings should be held, and in the length of tenure of office.

We respectfully submit the above proposals to the Conference and request your approval.

*Collected Documents of the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, p. 37.
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4. Prospects of Christianity in China – Zhao Fusan

Questions about the future of the Christian Church in China have been repeatedly raised by many of my friends and colleagues in different parts of the world. Implicitly, this question includes two component questions, namely: In a country like China under the leadership of the Communist Party, would there be religious freedom? And more fundamentally, how would the Chinese church cope with the challenge of Marxism towards Christianity? In other words, it reflects the concern of the Christians overseas for the future of the church in China and it shows a certain sense of uncertainty. This sense of uncertainty is quite understandable because many of us in the country raised the same question during the years between 1947 and 1949 and have given much thought to it. However, after living in China for the past three-and-a-half decades, I feel that I have acquired a new perspective.

In the first place, I think it is important for us all to guard against formulating questions without taking into account historical facts and Christian conviction. When one looks back over two millennia of the history of the Christian Church, one always finds that the life and witness of the church depends eventually on the church herself rather than on external factors. External factors do exert a certain amount of impact; however, they are not crucial. This is both a historical fact as well as a Christian conviction.

In bringing up the question of the future of the Christian Church in China, I think the second half of the question tends to be more fundamental. What is the challenge of Marxism to the Christian Church? This formulation no doubt rests on the premise that Marxism upholds materialism and atheism, and therefore, poses a serious challenge to the church. Here I would like to recall my own experience before 1949. I would at that time readily have identified with the formulation of this confrontation. However, after having been in China for the past thirty-five years and as a Chinese, I would like to raise some questions about the formulation of this theme.

Materialism has been a theme in Western speculative thought from the earliest recorded period to the present day. For instance, the Ionian philosophers in the tradition of Thales during the sixth century B.C., had already attempted to account for the origin and the present state of the world by appealing to changes in the state of fundamental substances. Parmenides of Elea vigorously defended not only monism of substances but also a monism of entities, maintaining that the world is one - uniform, eternal, homogenous, indivisible, indestructible and without any interior void. Materialism, therefore, has had a history of 2,500 years. It is not something new for any student of philosophy. Moreover, people would not put Marx and Engels in the category of the extreme materialists. Engels referred, for instance, in some of his letters to the impact of the superstructure upon the economic base.

As for atheism, it raises for us a question of historical testimony. For modern people this is again a question of definition. Historically speaking, one finds that agnosticism does not equal and is not equal to atheism. A critique of religion such as that by Spinoza has sometimes been taken as atheistic. Actually, if we really enter into the writings of Spinoza, we would find that he is certainly not an atheist, though he launched a very sharp critique on

religion. Also a critique of the church such as that by Kierkegaard does not mean that he was atheistic.

As for modern atheism one would find that at least in the West, one could trace it back to the 18th century Enlightenment philosophies of France. What was new with Marx as compared to the Enlightenment philosophers was that Marx advanced an interpretation of religion as a historical, social phenomenon. Again, in that respect, Marx was not unique. Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud went much further than Karl Marx when they claimed that religiosity is a kind of neurosis. In academe - in the West - certainly Durkheim and Freud exert even more influence than Karl Marx today.

The definition of atheism again becomes a question when one recalls what Paul Tillich wrote in his book *The Shaking of the Foundations* published in 1948. He defined atheism as the view that life has no depth - that it is shallow. Proceeding from this - from Paul Tillich's definition of atheism - one finds contemporary commercialism or secularism as a *de facto* atheist culture. And its challenge to Christianity or any religion could well supersede that of Marxism. If one looks at social life in Western Europe, and if one reads Bishop Leslie Newbigin's booklet *The Other Side of 1984* published by the British Council of Churches, one would note that there is a profound sense of crisis in the churches of the West in the face of this kind of secularization of society. Historically speaking, therefore, we find that materialism or atheism was not really initiated or invented by Karl Marx.

Also, from the point of view of Christian theology, Christianity is not just an institution. Fundamentally, it is a faith. And only when one accepts the Marxist proposition that Christian faith is an ideology can Marxism become a kind of challenge to Christianity on the same basis. As I had mentioned before, the other possibility would be to paint Marxism as a religion in which case Marxism and Christianity would be put on a par both for analysis and comparison. In that case we would need to redefine religion and in so doing commit an injustice to Christianity, or we would have to do an injustice to Marxism in order to counter one against the other. At any rate, speaking from a Christian point of view, I do not think that we should do that. Therefore, I think this theme - this proposition of the Marxist challenge to Christianity - is rather ambiguous in its very premise.

And now to proceed to the more realistic part of the question: In socialist China, what would be the attitude of the Communist Party or the government towards religion?

If I understand it correctly, neither Marx nor Engels seemed to proceed beyond some general orientation and principles for the future society which they called socialism or communism. For more than half a century, people became accustomed to the notion that the Soviet pattern of socialism is the pattern or the manifestation of what socialist society should be. One finds that in Europe, the Yugoslavs and the Romanians have their own interpretation and their own implementation of socialist programs. This has also been true on the part of the Chinese Communists who have been trying to develop a socialist system with Chinese features. In the realm of religious issues, one again finds that different communist parties have different perceptions and attitudes or programs towards religion. For instance, Euro-

Communism has its own approach to the religious question. Also, the Soviet Union's adoption of the militant Atheist League never had an equivalent in China.

The policy of the People's Government towards religion can be summarized in three sentences:

Religion is the private affair of citizens of the People's Republic of China. Secondly, all religious bodies and religious adherents should be law-abiding. Thirdly, no interference from outside in the religious affairs of the country is to be permitted.

And so it is stipulated in Article 36 of the Constitution. According to this Article: Every citizen of the Chinese People's Republic enjoys religious freedom. No state organ, social body or individual should impose belief or unbelief upon any citizen regarding religion nor should they discriminate against any religious adherent or any non-religious adherent. The state protects normal religious activities. No activity should be permitted to abuse religion, to sabotage or to impair social order, to damage the physical health of the citizens or to obstruct educational activities in the country. And no foreign domination over the religious affairs or religious bodies of the country is to be permitted.

In the Criminal Code there is another Article that states: Anyone who intervenes in the freedom of religion may be subject to a legal sentence of up to two years' imprisonment. The formulations of the constitutional clause and the Criminal Code regarding intervention in religious freedom were drafted with the participation of all religious circles, including the Christian members of that circle. I personally feel that any modern sovereign state would consider the religious issues of the country in this light. Realistically speaking, based on our experience in China, to have an office for religious affairs at the various levels of the government apparatus is convenient for the religious bodies to secure assistance to insure freedom of religion. For any need on the part of the religious bodies, whether for the printing of the Bible, the setting up of theological seminaries, or for traveling abroad, the Religious Affairs Office in the government is always ready to help and this ensures the implementation of the constitutional clause. For a country where Christians comprise only 0.8% of the total population, I think we could not ask for more.

Certainly, there will always be problems arising from time to time. These are not problems in the nature of policy but of interpretation of the policy at the lower levels - usually at the very grassroots level - and that need to be rectified.

What remains of the question "What about the future of the church in China" is really a question of "How should the church in China exert herself?" Here, there are questions that we need to think about.

Christianity in China Over the Last Thirty-Five Years

Now to begin with the first aspect - how to build up the body of Christ - the major issues we feel concerned about in the country are the message; church ministry and the Christian ministry; church polity; and integration with modern Chinese culture.

The very central one is the first about the message. As many of my colleagues and I understand it, to be a Christian does not mean to rule out the other meanings of life but to bring a more abundant meaning to life. It is not to refute the other meanings but to help people see the ultimate meaning through the more immediate ones. Over the past thirty-five years, the Chinese church has inquired into theology centering around creation, providence, salvation and ecclesia. Certainly these are the very basic issues that the apostolic church from its very beginning has been exploring.

With regard to Christianity in China, there is a comparatively strong evangelical wing. Take for instance the question of creation. Many times have the Christians struggled with the concrete question of whether the world falls within the domain of Satan or within the domain of God. And a second major issue was whether human nature is one of total depravity or whether it partly has the nature of sin and also the image of God. And centering around the providence of God we struggled for quite a long period about whether in the pursuit of Christian obedience historians should try to judge right or wrong. This seems absurd. But actually it was a lively issue for those who felt that "justification by faith" is enough, ruling out the judgment of moral right and wrong. Following this are questions on how to judge the morally right or wrong; the relationship between the law of God and the law of man, etc. What is the relationship between justification and sanctification? Are faith and morality contradictory to each other or are they unified? All these discussions center around the understanding of the providence of God. Questions were also raised centering around the issue of salvation: how do we understand the love the God and how do we understand justification by faith? How will Christians witness to the love of God? What is the proper relationship between believers and non-believers? Should they be contradictory to each other? Or are they different but capable of being friendly towards each other?

The question of ecclesiology revolves around whether the nature, the essence of the church, is various kinds of institutions or a fellowship of love. How do we understand denominational inclinations? Will they not obstruct the witness of the church? How should we understand the relationship between Christ and culture? How shall we build up an indigenous church? All these issues center around ecclesia. So you will find that over the past thirty-five years, the church in China has been struggling with these theological issues for a rethinking and understanding of the call from above and the way of Christian obedience. All these efforts have helped Chinese Christians to see that the social order which strives towards social equity and the dignity of humankind, as socialist society stands for, is also something that Christians should work for. It also helps Chinese Christians to refute anti-humanism and to support good leadership when the Chinese Communist Party is moving along the right path (certainly not the ultra-leftist). It concerns living in cordial and brotherly relationships with our people to affirm their moral attainment and to affirm ourselves, our own obligations. This has also enabled us to become proud of our share in the service of our own people. The Church, long split in the past century, has now begun to be unified, reconciled into one. In the integration of faith and practice the mainstream thinking among Chinese Christians is to adopt a positive attitude in everyday life while insisting on the transcendent aspect of the Christian faith and to affirm morality in taking an active part in the social life of the country. All these have helped in the development of the Chinese church in the past three-and-a-half decades. It also helped the people in general to really understand

Christianity and the Christian church in China. This kind of understanding on the part of the people in general has become so rooted that even social upheaval such as the Cultural Revolution could not uproot it.

In this process, the Christian Church is trying to develop her own message that Christ is at once the Savior for cosmic redemption, the Lord of history and also the personal Savior. Christ is at once the triumphant King and also the suffering servant. Thus, he gives meaning to the individual and to history. This forms the kind of message that attracts people to the church. This I think is a very basic aspect when one contemplates the future of the Chinese church.

One of our immediate problems now is the aging of the Christian ministry. In the next decade I think we will need thousands of Christian ministers in the church. At present, as far as I know, both the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches in China have theological seminaries in six different regions of the country. Generally, the seminarians come from Christian families and while their basis of Christian faith is satisfactory, their cultural upbringing is rather limited. Usually they are only high school graduates. Very rarely would we have some university graduates. This is one of our concerns at the moment. Also the faculty of these theological colleges have not kept up with the changes made by Vatican II. It seems that it takes two decades for the dust to really fall. And so this is also something we are concerned about.

A third major problem for the building of the Body of Christ is the question of church polity. In this respect, I feel that my Catholic brothers in China may well be in a better position than the Protestants because traditionally there have been so many different denominations in the Protestant churches in China. In terms of church polity, at present, it is really a kind of congregationalism. We in the Anglican tradition cannot imagine that the church could live without an apostolic succession. And equally true would be the framework of my Christian brothers from the Presbyterian tradition. They would think, likewise, that the church could only be authentic in the framework of Presbyterianism. So I really don't know what the eventual outcome will be. Sometimes, I jokingly think that we may someday have a kind of congregational Presbyterian Episcopacy at the very end. That we do not know. But I certainly feel that in the experience of drawing together in the fold of non-Roman Christianity, the past three-and-a-half decades have prepared the ground or the mind and heart of the Protestants to look to the day when the issue of church polity may be solved.

Looking at it from a longer perspective, I think it is also important for Christians in China to think about their response to the Chinese cultural tradition and its contemporary manifestation in the form of a socialist culture. If one looks back into the history of Buddhism and Islam, one may say that Buddhism is less well-organized than the Christian church. Islam is, generally speaking, less theological than Christianity. However, they have become more deeply rooted in China than Christianity. There is something for us Christians to learn from the Buddhists and from the Moslems: that we have to and we should develop a dialogue with the cultural milieu of the country. This has its difficulties. In the first place the cultural heritage of China is very much this-worldly, particularly with the impact of modern secularism, so people would usually be less responsive to the transcendent aspect of our

Christian faith. Secondly, Chinese cultural heritage would uphold that human nature is basically good and that is why people find it difficult to respond to the Christian notion of "sin" in human nature. Furthermore, the western version of Christianity since the Reformation which integrates or absorbs individualism into the Christian faith, sometimes furthers the distance between Christianity and the Chinese cultural heritage. It is in these three aspects, I think, that Chinese Christians, and especially students of theology, need to strive hard and learn to absorb Chinese culture in order to interpret the Christian faith, so that Christianity can really be sinicized. Otherwise, even though church architecture or the hymnal could be sinicized, Christianity would still be like a foreigner wearing a Chinese gown: the foreign collar would still be there.

The Church and Social Development

What could be the contribution of the Chinese church towards the economic and social development of the country? I would like to point out three aspects. In the first place, social service has always been part of the Christian tradition and also that of the other religious bodies. Up till this day, Buddhist temples in China have always had the tradition of repairing bridges and building roads. Even now, I know that many Buddhist monks are very good at afforestation and they are given awards for their contribution in afforestation wherever they are. The Christian church in China has traditionally provided different kinds of social services both through the YMCA and directly by the churches themselves. In this realm there is a lot more that we can do. It is also a matter of appropriating the necessary resources both in terms of personnel and funding.

A second course by which I think the church in China can contribute to the economic and social development of the country is in its cultural aspect. When one reads the papers in China, one would always find the sentence that the building up of the country consists of two parts, namely: the building up of material civilization, and of spiritual civilization. What is really meant by spiritual civilization? To my understanding it would include knowledge, culture, social morality and citizenship. According to the tradition of the Christian Church, we treasure the value of every individual and we give full attention to the character building of every individual. In the pastoral work of the church there are ample opportunities for us to pay attention to all four aspects by way of informal education. In this way, we would certainly be participating in the development of our nation.

A third aspect, I think, is to serve as a kind of bridge for mutual understanding and friendship between China and other countries for cultural interflow. Historically speaking, Buddhist monks served as a kind of bridge for cultural exchange between China, India and Japan. Likewise, the Moslems from Arabic countries and those from China served as a kind of bridge for Sino Arabic cultural exchange. However, one regrets that during the past three centuries, while science and technology have developed so rapidly and people are getting used to the notion of a shrinking world, one still finds that the knowledge of one people is usually very, very limited to a small number of specialists. Today, China is facing the entire world and I think she needs a much more profound understanding of the world and the world needs to understand China. Such contact could have different levels. I certainly do not feel that Coca-Cola or blue jeans or disco really represent western culture. Nor would the Great

Wall of Chin explain enough of China's present. For officials, business people and tourists, the intercourses, the exchanges could be helpful but then again these are limited because of their very nature. The understanding of a different culture calls for a much more profound effort to really get across, to have a kind of cross-cultural understanding. I certainly feel that this could be a realm where the Christian churches could offer their service. This will also be a contribution to the world community.

In thinking of the future of Christianity in China - that is the presence of the Chinese church in the church universal - we are all happy to observe the new developments in the ecumenical church since the 1960's and to find that plurality has been given full recognition in the life and work of the church. I trust that an indigenous, independent Chinese church is a contribution to the church universal. To be indigenous, autonomous and independent does not mean to be isolated. We are glad to develop church relations with all other churches in all parts of the world. This kind of relation is not just limited to an exchange of visits or an exchange of niceties. I think we have come to the point where we can explore the possibilities of a more vigorous sharing. I see no reason for any hindrance in this realm and I believe that we can really explore the Christian effort in educational exchange, in cultural activities and on a church to church basis. I trust that the door is wide open for developing such a relationship and of course the very basic principle is to be on an equal status. That is the very basic principle.

Finally, I think many of my Christian friends in the Philippines feel concerned about the future of international relationships with the Catholic Church in China. Of course, I think this question could best be answered by the Chinese Catholics. The Chinese Catholic bishops, in my impression, have also been vocal about their views in the last few years. However, if I try to avoid touching on these issues, I think I would be insincere with my Catholic friends so I will try to respond in a very personal way as to how I myself look at this. As an Anglican I do not feel that we belong to the category of Protestants. We would maintain that we are Catholics. I sincerely hope that there are no hostile activities or propaganda or secret activities among the Congregation - that the Catholic Congregation may continue on the mainland or be directed towards the mainland. Certainly, there are such activities now going on which I understand my Catholic friends at home feel very unhappy about. And I feel, personally, that these activities would only create an undesirable image of the Catholic Churches in other parts of the world in the eyes of the Chinese Catholics and block the way for an improvement of relationships. I trust that the exchange of visits would help to develop the kind of mutual understanding that would be conducive to the improvement of relations on a bilateral basis.

Then of course, there would be another question about the relationship with the Vatican. As I understand it, the Vatican is still maintaining its formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan and it is obviously the only state in the whole of Europe to retain that kind of formal diplomatic tie. I imagine it could be more embarrassing for the Vatican than for China. In this context the measures the Vatican would take to release herself from that kind of a situation are in her own hands.

Another recent occurrence which I find rather unfortunate was the appointment of the self-exiles - the former Bishop from Canton to Rome, Bishop Tang Yiming was appointed as the Archbishop of Canton without consulting the Chinese Catholic bishops. From my own little

knowledge of the new Canon Law of 1983, the appointment of a bishop in the Catholic Church would call for a consultation of the College of Bishops in that country. So this kind of appointment runs contrary even to the Canon Law of the Catholic Church, not to say that at this very moment, such a move certainly blocks the way to any improvement of relationships and makes the Chinese Catholics question how sincere the Pope's speech was, when he spoke about China in Manila.

I certainly feel that these events and others are the ones that all Christians feel concerned about with regard to improving relationships between Chinese Catholics and Catholics in other parts of the world. We should give more thought to them. Looking at the future of the Christian Church, one can help also by looking back into the history of the Christian Church in the past two millennia. As a student of history one would always find oneself confronting history and history in the making. That is how I find myself at this moment and it is not only a feeling of confrontation but also of hope and faith and of looking towards history in the making.

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5. Address to the Lutheran World Federation – K.H. Ting

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Thank you first of all for your interest in the church in China and willingness to come this evening. I am exceedingly happy to bring you the greetings in Jesus Christ of your fellow Christians in China. We in China are very conscious of the fact that we are a subject of prayers on the part of Christians in many parts of the world. We feel supported and are impelled to do things in such a way that we may not disappoint so many of you who place high expectations on us.

The main thing I have to tell you is simply that the Church of Jesus Christ is there in China. This may sound obvious and unexciting to some of you, but China is not like Denmark where Christian faith has taken root rather deeply. Since the seventh century there have been several previous attempts to make Christianity stay in China and they all failed. Specially shocking was the fact that Christianity in its Nestorian form, which could flourish in China for over 200 years, still disappeared completely except in the form of a stone tablet. Thus, that the church is there in China is not anything we can take for granted. That it is there is God's work and our hearts are full of thanksgiving for what God is doing.

The staying power of the church in China faced a test recently and the result gives us grounds to think that, this time, Christianity is not so likely to be easily displaced by forces hostile to it.

From 1966 to 1976 there was in China a ten-year period of anarchy and disorder, the Cultural Revolution, which turned out to be something thoroughly anti-cultural. "Ultra-leftism" was in control. The "ultra-leftists" persecuted all those whom they disliked - revolutionaries of the previous stage, high government officials, intellectuals, artists, scientists, educators, religious people. Universities suspended their classes and students went into the streets to make revolution. Christian churches all over China were closed down and put to other uses if not dismantled. Our seminary in Nanjing became the headquarters of the red guards of the city and we were all driven out of it. Many of our colleagues in the church had to suffer in all sorts of ways. These Christians mostly do not think it is good to take pride in the fact that they have suffered a little for the name of Jesus Christ, so they generally are not eager to describe what they have gone through.

Even in those days Christians did not forget the teaching in the Epistle to the Hebrews that Christians should not cease to meet. We met in homes. We got together once a week, or once in two weeks, or still less often, ten or fifteen or twenty or more of us. We would have tea together, say our prayers together, study the Bible together, and talk over together what we each got out of the passage. Nobody was the minister; we ministered unto each other. Ministers should not insist on their being ministers and be teachy, as they were just members of the group. There was sharing in depth, called "communication," and that was spiritually fulfilling. We all had our Bibles taken away from us, but many Christians could recite various passages from memory and we all put them down in our notebooks. We developed

simple ways to celebrate the Eucharist: the name given to it was simply thanksgiving, or breaking bread.

All that I want to say is that, although we have church buildings such as this one which is historic and helps us greatly to worship God in the beauty of holiness, the church of Jesus Christ can exist in all sorts of places wherever Jesus Christ himself is with his disciples, particularly as he breaks bread with us. As the New Testament shows, Christians had been meeting in homes long before there were church buildings.

During the Cultural Revolution all our church organizations were disbanded. Like many of my colleagues I was quite isolated and did not know what was going on among the Christians. My assumption in those days was that the number of Christians would have dwindled greatly and that this fourth attempt to land Christianity in China was probably again going to be a failure; all that would remain would be groups of Christians here and there meeting in homes. It was only later that I came to know that Christians had been meeting in homes all over China in growing numbers and that in my own city of Nanjing there were as many as twenty-five such groups meeting regularly, except in the first few months of the Cultural Revolution.

Today, while we have got thousands of churches back and have built simple new ones, largely in the countryside, we still have tens of thousands of groups worshipping in ordinary houses, many in homes. It is a highly laicized form of Christianity that will remain as a mark of the church in China for many years to come. My mother, who was the one Christian in the world who prayed the hardest for me and who died a year ago at the age of 101, had one such group in her house once a week until she was not strong enough to carry it on.

The first few years after the end of the Cultural Revolution were spent in the political and material rehabilitation of our ministers and church leaders. This means the restoration of their status as good citizens of China and the reimbursement of their financial and material losses. Only then were they in the position to return to the work of the church.

Since 1979 churches are being re-opened or built at the rate of at least one per day for the whole of China. This means that for the Protestants there are now over 4,000 churches used for public worship.

The Chinese churches and groups are self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, as a result of the Three-Self Movement which started early in the 1950's. The missionary movement which began in the 18th century came into being at the time of western colonial expansion and, consequently, there were certain unfortunate associations. But I should not like you to think that Chinese Christians are being anti-missionary. For all the good work missionaries from abroad did we are ever thankful to God and to them. We appreciate the dedication of many missionaries from Denmark who worked mainly in the Northeast, formerly Manchuria. I know of one Danish missionary who chose to live in China as a Chinese citizen and who died in her old age some years ago. I am most pleased that this morning I met some of her friends who told me that her name was Ellen Nielson.

The whole point of the Three-Self Movement is to make the church in China Chinese, just as Chinese as the church in Denmark is Danish and the church in Sweden is Swedish. The time came for us to live down the western image Christianity had acquired in China. Christianity needs to be de-westernized for winning the Chinese for Christ just as much as, in the first century, it needed to be de-judaized for winning the gentiles for Christ, and that was what the conference in Jerusalem was all about, as recorded in Acts 5.

As far as I know, it was Henry Venn, the chief secretary of the Church Missionary Society of England, who in 1850 first put these three things together as the goal of missionary work. We all know that good missionaries always work hard to make themselves dispensable. I like Christians abroad to see that a church which is trying to be Chinese is not a denial of the worth of the missionaries' work, but rather its fruition.

The number of Protestants has grown in the last thirty-seven years from 700,000 to three to four million. Chinese Christians are bearing witness to Christ with enthusiasm but, aside from this, the Three-Self Movement must be another important factor to account for this growth because a Christianity with a Chinese selfhood is much more likely to make the Chinese people want to know what it is all about.

There are some abroad who like to say that the number of Protestants in China is now 30 or 50 or even 100 million. This assertion has much to do with their aversion to New China, to the Three-Self Movement and their need to raise funds for their own purposes. What I have to say is simply that we who work in China have not found conversion to be so easy, that we have good cause to thank God for an increase in the number of Protestants in thirty-seven years at least twice as fast as the growth of the Chinese population, and that figures must be given carefully and responsibly and only on the basis of facts, not on any human need for sensationalism to bring about questionable effects.

As we look back we cannot but see how God gave the Chinese Christians the Three-Self Movement not only to strengthen the evangelistic potential of the church, but also to prepare us to survive the fire of the Cultural Revolution and to emerge from it ready to build up the church in unity and in full strength.

When we say three-self, we refer only to self-government, self-support and self-propagation. You will have seen that self-isolation is not one of them. We want to remind ourselves we are a part of the church universal. We read in the book of Revelation of the seven churches in Asia Minor which were all different and, therefore, the seven letters John wrote to them were also different. But all seven letters have the same ending: Let those who have ears hear what the Holy Spirit says to all the churches. So we cannot afford not to hear the messages other churches are getting from the Holy Spirit. We believe in interdependence among churches, but we think an independent Chinese church can enter into this interdependence better than a dependent one.

In China today if you hear Christians making their testimonies to their faith, you will notice that many will dwell on what they call the Resurrection Truth as an event of their own experience as Christian individuals, as Chinese church and as Chinese nation.

The Cultural Revolution was a time when Chinese Christians with the Chinese people as a whole went through the valley of the shadow of death. After going through and coming out of this valley, Chinese Christians see that the Lord is indeed our shepherd who restores our souls and whose rod and staff do comfort us as much as green pastures. Out of our own experience we feel we know a little better not only the Lord who was crucified for human sin, but also the Lord who has risen and ascended, who sits at the right hand of God and who is the King of the whole universe. From our own experience we seem to understand better the place of Christ's resurrection after suffering and death, and in the light of Christ's resurrection we seem to have found some substantiation of the Resurrection Truth in our own life. Resurrection is the work most descriptive of what we have gone through.

In the Chinese church during the Cultural Revolution, we had our Thomases, our Peters and even our Judases, but, taking the Christians by and large, we find their faith in Christ strengthened, their repentance, forgiveness and mutual love in Jesus Christ accepted in thanksgiving and their evangelistic zeal heightened.

Before 1949 we had in China certain Christian intellectuals who took pride in adhering to what they called the social gospel, which taught mainly the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man, Jesus as a moral teacher or model, the Sermon on the Mount as the most important part of the Bible, the achievement of the Kingdom of God on earth as the task of Christians. In the course of these thirty or more years, some of them have left the church to join what they consider to be more effective social movements, while the majority have come to take over the Logos and cosmic Christology of St. John's Gospel and St. Paul's epistles, as given for instance in that to the Colossians. This is a very liberating experience - to be engaged in the daily work for a more prosperous, progressive and humane society and, at the same time, rooted and grounded in a faith which gives us a transcendental perspective and enables us to see the meaning, value and work of what our hands do in relation to the Christ who is upholding the universe with his word of power. I do not meet in China one single Christian who still regards himself or herself as a social gospeller.

On the other hand a very important change on the theological scene is that the theology of those who advocate fundamentalism and evangelicalism has in the last thirty or more years become less harsh and less grim and more loving. They are willing to consider other Christians as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

These changes on both sides have provided a good theological basis for the unity which our China Christian Council represents.

The livelihood and morale of the people have been elevated so remarkably in the last thirty or more years that we Chinese Christians are most of us supporters of New China and her modernization program. But in the territory of the spirit and conscience, our supreme loyalty and obedience must be to Jesus Christ only.

In the last six years we have produced in China in three cities over two million Bibles, mostly complete ones. With the help of the United Bible Societies to the Amity Foundation, a

people's organization initiated by a group of Christian citizens and co-opting non-Christian friends in our society, the Amity Printing Press will be operating before long and will give priority to the printing Bibles and Christian literature. There are ten theological training centers with some 600 young men and women under training.

There are three national journals for Protestant Christian. A fourth one, specially for those in rural areas, is now under consideration.

In order that your prayers for Chinese Christians will be more informed, I would like now to tell you some of our problems:

1. The big age-gap in leadership caused by our inability to carry on adequate theological training for a number of years. There is a preponderance of older colleagues. This situation is going to get worse in five or ten years' time, before it can turn for the better
2. Our churches are mostly full on Sundays but, unfortunately, our work of Christian nurture has to be largely on a massive basis. There is little personalized pastoral care for the building up of Christian spirituality. We need a ministry that can cope with the influx of converts.
3. We have ten theological schools but only one of them has relatively complete full-time teaching staff. We lack trained teachers.
4. Because of the vastness of the country and the shortage workers, a number of groups of Christians meeting in homes are in isolation. This makes for wrong and even heretical teaching
5. The Peoples' Government on all levels has repeatedly affirmed and is doing much for the implementation of the principle religious freedom, not because it has a high opinion of religion but because it wishes to unite the whole people, including religious people, in the upbuilding of the nation. But there is still the lingering influence of ultra-leftism which makes for a lack of enthusiasm correctly implementing religious freedom here and there in some parts of China.
6. Denominational structures no longer exist and all non-Roman Catholic Christians are within our China Christian Council. In this sense we are post-denominational. But this council is not yet the future, united church of China. We do not see what the next step which God wants us to take is. We need to wait for God's time and, meanwhile, avoid any human impulsiveness.

So, the church is there in China in the grace of Jesus Christ and with no lack of problems. Here are at least six problem areas which we would like you to know and to remember when you pray for us.

As I close, may I say that, if there are in this church tonight former missionaries to China or their children, I will be so pleased if they will just let me know at the end of the meeting so that we can at least shake hands!

Thank you for listening to me.

Address delivered to the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the public in Viborg, Denmark, 12 July 1987.

6. Experiences on the Road to Church Unity – Shi Zesheng

In the Standing Committee's report, it was clearly stated that we must continue to uphold the three-self principle and struggle to establish a church for New China based on that principle. This is the long-term, arduous responsibility which has been set for us. Just how should we go about establishing a church in New China according to the three-self principle? Of course the criteria and requirements cannot be limited to one aspect because three self includes self-government, self-support and self-propagation. However, I believe that in any event, in the process of moving gradually from federation to real unity three-self should always be an important feature of establishing the church in New China.

Everyone knows that the old, colonial image of the churches in China under foreign control was that of numerous denominations, various churches and sects constantly at odds with each other. Given conditions in old China and the fact that the churches then acted as a "foreign religion" things could only have been this way. Even though for a long time many insightful people had been pointing out that this situation clearly contravened the teachings of the Bible and were emphatically calling for change, this great problem of moving from federation to unity could never be solved. Resolution of this problem was impossible because the conditions which created this situation still endured. Times have changed. Now our motherland has established itself as independent and autonomous in the international community and the Chinese people have stood up. It is only in this new situation that the Three Self Movement has been able to establish a church for New China. At this stage in our history how can we still permit, whether intentionally or not, old, vestigial influences to hamper us? Especially now, when there are calls all over the country to unite under the banner of patriotism? Think about it - how can a church which is split into many factions, all attacking each other, reflect the glory of the Lord and bear witness for the Lord?

In addition, we have learned from experience in recent years that the method most often employed by those who fervently desire to put the church in China back on the old road is to emphasize denominational differences and thereby create divisions among us; they do this to induce people to leave us as well as to infiltrate our ranks. This is something which we can by no means take lightly.

In the past few years, clergy and laity in our Beijing church, taking these points into consideration, have worked and achieved certain results in our efforts to increase our solidarity and to promote the unity of our church. I would now like to report to you a few of our experiences in our continuing search for a solution.

First of all, we believe that what we now speak of as unity is not uniformity, not a drab monochrome. It is just because of this that we can speak of our mutual respect for each other's beliefs and of seeking the common ground in spite of our differences. We not only admit that there do actually exist 'minor differences' among us; we regard this as a perfectly normal and natural phenomenon. Christ's grace, and the truth of the Bible are exceedingly abundant and available to all. No one has the right to monopolize them. This is just what Paul spoke of in his image of a body with many limbs. These objective realities not only give

us no reason to quarrel among ourselves, they should indeed be the main basis for our mutual acceptance; "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit."

We have come to appreciate deeply that emphasizing this sort of modest and magnanimous spirit is a prerequisite for accomplishing the work of unification. In our spiritual lives we must exert total effort to respect and fulfill everyone's varying needs if we are to create a unified church worthy of the name. We believe that although all belong to one "body," the more and different "limbs" there are the more the health and vitality of the body is expressed. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this. Therefore, as you know, we in the Beijing church have retained various diverse arrangements in the manner of taking communion and the method of baptism and have allowed everyone to choose freely based on their needs or what they are accustomed to. Experience has shown that this method is very effective in promoting unity and has brought about absolutely no divisiveness.

Although we have recognized the existence of differences, we do not stress them to an inappropriate degree. In the final analysis, we believe that these "minor differences" are insignificant and secondary in comparison to our "major unity" of basic faith. Over the past few years, everyone has come to appreciate more and more that basic tenets of faith such as "The Apostle's Creed," are accepted and believed in by all. Since we are as one in the principal things, no one has any reason to use "minor differences" as a pretext to reject another. It is very beneficial to expound this principle repeatedly. For example, in the past there were some churches in Beijing who opposed the celebration of Christmas, some even felt that celebrating Christmas was sinful. In 1979, the first Christmas after our church was restored, we definitely felt there was a problem because our church was about evenly divided between those who celebrated Christmas and those who did not. What could we do? After long consideration and study, we first of all realized that the incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was wonder] news for all humankind. We should be thankful and give praise for this gift every day, and we should commemorate it on December 25. What did it matter that those who celebrate Christmas are not even certain that Jesus was born on that day? On the other hand we all believed that one day over a thousand years ago Jesus was really born and that we should always commemorate it - this is the "major unity" among us. Possessing this foundation of "major unity" sufficed to allow everyone to decide entirely for themselves according to their own wishes, whether they would attend the Christmas service or not. After we explained the issue in this way, not only had mutual respect been achieved, we also discovered that some of those members who originally did not celebrate Christmas not only joined in our Christmas activities but even volunteered help distribute the order of service at the door of the church.

I can cite a similar example with regard to the issue of baptism. We believe that the meaning of baptism does not lie in externals. In themselves these are not a condition of receiving grace and attaining salvation, but are rather solemn symbols before God a humanity of a person's receiving the Lord. Therefore, the main thing is that one must experience in spirit having died with the Lord, being buried with and having risen with Him. This is the "major unit we share. If one departs from the true meaning expressed in baptism, then any method of baptism is in vain. After recognizing this point, everyone can see clearly that we have no reason to refuse membership to any person who has truly received the Lord,

matter how that person was baptized, because we cannot deny anyone who has been received by the Lord.

Another point is that true unity must be accomplished through complete mutual respect; it absolutely cannot be a case of my caring for and uniting with you on my own terms nor of your caring for and uniting with me on your terms. We are very glad that the amended Constitution of the China Christian Council highlights the point that we must unite with all Christians throughout the nation not simply with one portion of them. Since everyone is the object of unity everyone must also work towards unity.

I recall that after we had arranged worship services for Seven Day Adventists at our Beijing church, a believer who kept in Seventh Day approached the pastor and said he was very grateful to the Three-Self Movement and to the church for "looking after" him. The pastor replied that this was incorrect, that the church and Three-Self was for him as well as for us and that it was not a matter of us "looking after" him but rather one of all of us caring about one another and serving one another.

We have a deep appreciation of the fact that unity is a very delicate task. When dealing with problems in this area, not only must you have a grasp of the major principles and tendencies, but you must also take care to be patient and discreet. One must appreciate that for a person to learn new things and new issues requires a gradual process; you cannot assume that all problems can be solved in an evening. Therefore gradual change and progress will surely come about in time, and in time it will be completely affirmed. The work of unification involves working with people, and people can change. So, we must study all the problems of the past through the eyes of history, otherwise we will close ourselves off and make no progress.

Everyone knows that formerly the church in Beijing, like churches elsewhere, not only had many denominations, but that the boundaries between these denominations were very strictly delineated; but with the passage of time and changing conditions a number of brothers and sisters in the various churches, over a long period of time and to varying degrees, began to have a new understanding as to the problems of unification. There are those among them today whose understanding of the three-self principles is very thorough and accurate. These people have a lot of prestige among their own circle of brothers and sisters. Once these fellow believers changed their minds, they always volunteered to advance the work of the Three-Self Movement and to promote the unity of the church. They contribute their utmost; this is very precious. This can be very well illustrated by Pastor Wang Zhen's statements in his final years, and this is the reason everyone cherishes his memory today. This is just the sort of person whose experiences in coming to understand and accept Three-self can be employed as an example to win people over. We should not only welcome these people, but also trust them completely, because a lot of our work depends on them. Experience has shown that these people make a very valuable contribution in expanding the scope of unity. Therefore we must reiterate that in the Three-Self Movement of love-country, love-church there must be no first or last; everyone should be regarded as equal. This is not a matter of tactics. We sincerely and honestly affirm it. Those who even now oppose the road we have taken should not be looked down upon. We should wait

confidently for them to change and we should work harder to attain this. Who can say that after a period of time some of these people will not become active elements supporting the Three-Self Movement? Since believe our road is the correct one, we should be confident at broad-minded.

Finally, I would like to speak of something we have experienced over the past few years. In recent contacts with foreign visitors, we have often talked with many people who are friendly sincere, and full of warmth towards us. They have expressed the admiration and even envy as to what the church in China has been able to accomplish in its progress towards unity. One clearly realizes from what they say that this has been their ideal for a long time the sad thing is that it has proven to be beyond their reach. We have absolutely no desire to foist our methods upon others. We feel the churches in each country should choose their own road according to their particular situation; to copy others indiscriminately incorrect. Here I would say that unity should always be related to prevailing trends and to the wishes of the people. And is it no strange that when even foreigners are so envious of us, there are those among us (admittedly a small minority) who don't realize that they should treasure what we have already accomplished, results which have not come easily? How ridiculous!

The churches in the Three-Self Movement are gradually proceeding from federation to unity. A church which is not now united cannot govern itself well, support itself well nor propagate well. The task of unity is an arduous one. Even though we have already had good results, we are still very far from the goal we want to achieve. We can merely say that we have taken the first step. We shall certainly hold fast to the correct road we are taking. We firmly believe that no obstacles will impede our ongoing advance. This is the glorious mission which history has imposed upon the Chinese church.

*Collected Documents of the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, p.59.
translated by William Dockery*

7. Three-Self Continues to Move Forward – Shen Mingcui

Are we out of step with the times with our Three-Self Patriotic Movement? Definitely not! For the Three-Self Patriotic Movement is responding to the entirely new situation. Definite progress has been made under Three-Self leadership in the development of a church with Chinese characteristics.

In the work report of the Joint Standing Committee of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, the word "new" often appears. This was a revelation to me and I want to share with you all that is in my heart.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement was begun over thirty years ago. A great deal has been accomplished in those years. At home and abroad, respect and appreciation for the Movement have grown. We should not, however, rest content with past achievements. We should move ahead toward our goals of an independent, self-governed, well-governed church.

First, we must initiate a new day in Christian work in China. In the area of self-government, we must first of all eliminate faults which are not in accord with the will of God but are purely human in nature. Many of these were inherited from foreign mission organizations.

We must also establish a national church structure, we must reorganize the church and we must seek to achieve greater church unity.

When we have accomplished these four tasks, Christian work in China will enter upon a new situation.

In the past denominational mission organizations from overseas brought the Lord's gospel to China and we are grateful for this. But in politics, economics, culture, education and church structure, they left us with many problems of a purely human nature. These run counter to the will of God. Though these mission organizations withdrew after Liberation and the church began to be united, their influence persisted. For example, in some local churches, there were people who, though they wanted others to respect their views in matters of faith, were not happy about respecting the faith of others. All this can be attributed to the influence of foreign missions.

As far as the liturgy is concerned, we now have the *New Hymnal* and some provinces and municipalities have drafted common orders of service. These are good things. But let us go a step further and set up a national "Committee on Chinese Protestant Worship and Order." This would mark the beginnings of great improvements nationwide.

On the subject of unity, in addition to taking strict precautions against the deliberate meddling of anti-China, anti-Three-Self groups overseas, we need to strengthen internal unity.

As for the relationship between the Three-Self Committee and the China Christian Council, or that among clergy, it should be like the mingling of milk and water - a perfect blend.

This is especially true of the relationship between new and old pastors, and of that between new and older church workers. This is a pressing issue requiring immediate attention. Some elderly pastors and responsible workers in Three-Self and the Christian councils are happy to step down and let middle-aged and young pastors and church workers take over. This is a good thing. But there have been cases where, as soon as the new generation has taken over, they have completely negated the accomplishments of the former leaders in order to prove themselves. They make all sorts of strange pronouncements and fail to show respect for older pastors and workers. In other places things have even got to the point where there are the problems mentioned by Chloe in 1 Corinthians 1:11-12. Of course in some places, the older pastors and workers show no concern for those who have replaced them. They do not practice what they preach. This should be corrected.

Second: We must do a better job in the seminaries to promote research into self-propagation, to encourage religious life, to improve church publications and to train the next generation of pastors and church leaders. Nanjing Theological Seminary is our highest seat of Christian learning and must be well managed. Other seminaries must also be well run. If resources are insufficient, it would be better not to open such seminaries. There are many other channels which can be pursued in training workers for the Lord - short term Bible classes, lay training, etc. We can even use the method by which Elijah trained and tutored Elisha. All this will enable theological education to flourish in China.

It cannot be denied that we have an aging population of pastors and church personnel in the local churches: a gerontocracy. This phenomenon makes a judicious choice of successors and their training an even more urgent task.

Another pressing matter is the study of what constitutes self-propagation. Healing by casting out demons and the like approach superstition. We do not find much witness to the truth of the gospel in such practices. Believers who are drawn to such practices are weak in the face of heresy and are prone to excesses. These things inhibit the lively exchange of theological ideas among believers as well as their growth in scriptural and theological understanding. All this should be seriously discussed in the course of studying self-propagation. In this way we may arrive at a knowledge more in line with the truth.

Additionally, we must guide believers in leading good religious lives. According to church tradition, new believers should first attend inquirers' classes, and should then be examined in the faith. Only those who meet these standards should be baptized. We should not emphasize quantity over quality.

Regarding liturgy, I have heard that our international friends have made the following critique of worship services in China: 1) our emulation of foreign ways; and 2) our conservatism. When they worship in China, they find it very difficult to understand why the forms of worship in our churches are still those of thirty years ago. The hymns we sing, too,

have lyrics and tunes originally imported from overseas over thirty years ago. Though we have recently published the New *Hymnal* which contains over one hundred hymns composed by Chinese ourselves, not many people choose to sing them. It may simply be that the new tunes are still unfamiliar. Whatever the reason, people still prefer to sing those from abroad and this inevitably seems strange to foreign visitors. Now this situation has not come about because no Chinese has produced a good hymn in over thirty years. The facts belie this. Of course, I must make it clear that many imported hymns have transcended their origins and become part of the treasure of the world church and there is nothing wrong with our enjoyment of them. But the point is that we should create and sing more hymns appropriate to the special character of our own church. There will come a day when hymns written by Chinese ourselves will become part of the treasure of the world church as well.

Our celebration of Christmas is another example. We have Christmas trees, Santa Claus, Christmas cards and the like. Of course, we can celebrate in this way. Shouldn't we also, however, adapt Chinese customs? Eat long life noodles, write and display celebratory couplets and so on? New light is often received in Christian theology overseas; this is quite in accord with Biblical truth. In that case, certainly China can make discoveries and developments in theology. Of course we must proceed cautiously. We cannot do just any old thing, otherwise there will be chaos. But we must not stop for fear of this possibility. Buddhism too was very much a "foreign religion," when it first entered China. But later, because it continued to blend with local ethnic groups, customs, sentiments and ways of doing things, as well as with high Chinese culture and the intelligentsia, it gradually became an indigenous Chinese religion. In light of this, it is worth meditating before God on how we may make the church in China a church with Chinese characteristics!

Another task to be undertaken in implementing self-propagation is the successful handling of church publications. At present, the contents of our *Tian Feng Monthly* are much richer than before, but further progress in this regard is called for. We must have more publications of a wider variety. All our publications should be marked by four characteristics: spirituality, patriotism, learning and interest. Then our *Tian Feng Monthly* will have something to offer everyone: clergy, laity and visitor. I have similar hopes for the *Nanjing Theological Review*.

Third: We must improve in the stewardship of our resources and in self-support. Church property must be well-managed, promissory offering schemes set up, financial planning instituted and self-support enterprises developed. All these require attention.

In the past under the influence of "leftist" thinking, there were those who spoke of voluntary contributions by believers as a form of oppression. Even today there are many churches which fear to raise the subject of stewardship. Actually, as long as there is no coercion, as long as the proceeds are not being used to line anyone's pockets and are democratically managed, rationally used, and regular accounting is kept, there can be no question of exploitation. We must do a good job of reinstating offering schemes.

Fourth: We must genuinely support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government. Our support is expressed in assisting in the implementation of

religious policy, in encouraging active Christian participation in the four modernizations and in socialist construction, and in showing hospitality to foreign visitors.

The Chinese Communist Party is the leading party of our country, and it is atheist. Yet we are citizens of China, and we are theists. Our differences are clear. But politically, Marxists and religious believers can and moreover, should, form a united front in the common struggle for modernization. In the "Constitution of the People's Republic of China" promulgated under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, there is a clear article stipulating freedom of religious belief. Our response should be an attitude of unambiguous recognition of the Chinese Communist Party as a Party which leads well. As Christians, we should join in socialist construction and strive to be progressive on every front. And we should exhort our fellow Christians to do likewise. This in no way violates the teaching of the Bible: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1). Nor does the fact that in every province, municipality and autonomous region, we have clergy and lay people who have been chosen as delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC), as committee members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress (CPPCC), and other public offices or honorary public offices, and take part in discussions of national affairs, constitute a violation of this teaching. If we feel that the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government are not doing enough in some areas, or have certain failings, we can make our opinions known. This will silence those anti-China, anti-Three-Self persons overseas, who censure clergy in China saying they cannot play a prophetic role. There are anti-China, anti-Three-Self forces overseas who claim that we are a "government-run church," when in fact our church is truly run by Chinese Christians ourselves. We have nothing to fear from their slander.

China's policy of religious freedom has been clearly stipulated in its National Constitution. The Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government have continuously and conscientiously carried out that policy. We in religious circles have the right and the duty to aid the Party and the People's Government in implementing this policy. It is our right and duty to help the Christian masses to continually raise their patriotic and socialist awareness; to strive for our legitimate rights and interests as religious believers; to organize and guide God's children in leading normal religious lives; and to manage well our church based on three-self principles.

In striving for our legitimate rights and interests as members of religious circles in particular, we must display greater confidence in the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government, show our mutual dedication and empathy, and be true and forthright friends.

To purify our church, we must also be concerned with eliminating all activities which surpass the bounds of the constitutional framework, such as those known as "Yellers." In such cases we should increase our vigilance.

Our country has now opened up to the outside world; and our church, too, has developed friendly international exchanges, visits and activities. Visitors have included those who are

friendly, those who take a middle position and those who harbor ill will. Naturally we must differentiate in our treatment of them and adhere to a policy that is neither overbearing nor subservient. We should treat them with respect while at the same time guarding against foreign infiltration. In recent years, it has become common for us to send delegations abroad and the results have been very good. Our visits abroad enable our overseas brothers and sisters in Christ to gain a completely fresh picture of the church in New China. Naturally, we will want to continue to open up such work in the future, to enable international friends to gain a sense that the church in "post-Cultural Revolution" China is not as rumor abroad would have it - church leaders twinkling alone like a few scattered orbs - but exactly the opposite, that the Chinese church yet blazes with a multitude of stars!

I have not put my report very brilliantly; these are just a few personal observations. I offer them for consideration by the delegates and the elder generation of the church. If there is any point I have dealt with inappropriately, I hope you will correct me in the spirit of the Lord's love. Amen.

*Collected Documents of the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, p.100.
translated by Janice Wickeri*

8. Seeking the Common Ground and Unity – Shen Xilin

Denominations have disappeared from the Chinese church. We share the same basic faith, but we have received different light from our God. The common worship gatherings we are able to hold today would not have been possible prior to Liberation. In those days, Western mission boards carved out spheres of influence based on the differences in their own national backgrounds, making it impossible for us to unite. The Bible says: Christ is the head and we are the branches; the body of Christ is one, it cannot be divided. Therefore we should be one. We should unite.

Our oneness and unity are founded upon a highly important cornerstone: the principle of the National Three-Self Patriotic Movement - mutual respect in matters of faith. There should be no interference in or forced uniformity of faith. This principle aims at oneness and unity. It certainly does not seek to raise the flag of denominationalism anew. We apply the principle of mutual respect to the different light we have received from God in seeking the greater common ground while reserving small differences. This is the foundation on which all Christians in China may be united. We are one together; to unite is to make "mutual respect" the foundation of our relationship. Only by respecting the special characteristics of the liturgies of respective faith backgrounds can we enlarge the scope of unity.

According to the religious policy of the Party, "The essence of the policy of religious freedom is to make religious faith a matter of private free choice for the citizen, a private and individual matter." If faith is a private matter, every citizen has the right to choose for themselves, to believe or not to believe. Within a given religion, a person has the freedom to follow this or that branch. We should respect the believer's freedom in matters of faith, as is stipulated by our National Constitution and by the religious policy of the Party. So, as members of the China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement, we should embody these principles, respecting the special characteristics of different denominational liturgies. In order to unite all patriotic believers, we should take the initiative in facilitating the observance of various liturgies. Bishop Ting has said, "We emphasize mutual respect in order to broaden the scope of our unity; we should unite with all patriotic believers, their special liturgical practices should be respected. This is a progressive, not a regressive attitude." He gave as an example, "That five methods of conducting communion services are used throughout Beijing is a progressive situation." In many local churches, the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement provide basins for Christians from a Seventh Day Adventist background to use in their foot washing ritual. This is a good example for all of us. As a result of actions such as this, Christians throughout the nation have come to recognize that Three-Self conforms to the wishes of believers themselves. This has created a new situation for Three-Self and has attracted patriotic Christians nationwide to the organization.

Three-Self is not a church but a voluntary patriotic association of believers. "The church is not a unit subordinate to the Three-Self organization, it is the body of Christ, the place where the Lord resides. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and the China Christian Council are products of history." Therefore Three-Self organizations at all levels

must respect the normal religious activities of the local churches, seek the common ground while reserving differences and resolutely oppose any attempt at imposing uniformity. In this way the unity of patriotic Christians will be enhanced and even more Christians will find it possible to participate in the Three-Self Movement. Respect for denominational forms of worship does not imply that denominations will be permitted. A comrade outside the church has said: "In terms of upholding three-self, church unity, and social stability and unity, the unification of worship for all denominational backgrounds is a big step forward. We are not in favor of a minority forming factions or denominations. If the billion people of the nation can be united, why not the few million Christians?" Nor does Biblical teaching permit factions: ". . . (that) all of you agree and that there be no dissension among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." "Is Christ divided?" (1Cor.1:10-17). As Rev. Peter Tsai has said, respect for the light of each denomination means precisely that "unity of faith is not uniformity; to demand uniformity in faith is to lose the richness of Christ."

The work report of the Joint Standing Committee of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee says that we must "strengthen the unity of Christians who worship in the church building and those who worship outside it." In our three-self work we must strengthen unity among all Christians, not only those who worship within the church building. Our principle is, that as long as Christians are patriotic and share our basic beliefs, we will seek the larger common ground while reserving minor differences. No matter what the differences between us in liturgy, we will respect their particularity. In so doing, we will be extending the unity of our Three-Self Movement.

In the opening worship of the national conference, Rev. Yin Xuceng said, "The early church, that of the apostolic age, was good. Paul and Peter made an excellent impression in people's minds. They preserved Christ's teachings, praying with one heart and mind in the temple that God would save more people for the church, that it would become a church beloved of the people. Later, however, it deviated from this good image." A good image or impression is very important. The good impression achieved by Paul and Peter should be our model. What kind of model was Paul? He said, "I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:33-35). This is the example which Paul has left for us. What kind of example do we have from Peter then? "Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (I Pet. 5:2-3). Pray God to enlighten us and show us reality as it is, pray that he will reveal to us how our clergy and church workers should follow the example of the fine image presented by Paul and Peter. If we serve in the house of God following the example of Peter and Paul, then we will be more convincing and will be able to bring more patriotic Christians to involvement in Three-Self. This is an important part of establishing a church throughout China which is in accord with the heart and mind of God.

As we raise high the banner of three-self patriotism, we must "practice what we preach," we in the church must offer sustenance for life eternal and witness through our everyday lives.

How can a person bear witness in his or her life without intimate fellowship with God? The church we establish must truly love country and love church. This would be out of the question for Christians who offer no food for the spirit or who are unable to witness through their lives. In some places good Christians object to Three-Self. This is because we have lost the witness in our lives, we have lost the Christian image or aspect. We must comply with the teachings of the Bible. Paul said, "Show yourselves in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity and sound speech that cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us" (Titus 2:7-8).

In Sheng County and Xinchang in Zhejiang province, Christians who had been under the influence of the Yellers have come round. We certainly did not use any lofty rhetoric nor bring any pressure to bear to achieve this, but simply in the course of fellowship with them, their brothers and sisters (ourselves) were able to share spiritual food with them. During this time of fellowship, they recognized that we maintain a pure faith as God-fearing brethren and they joined the Three-Self Patriotic organization quite naturally. Brothers and sisters, how important it is to share the gift of eternal life and to witness through our lives!

The report of the Joint Standing Committee of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee lists administering well, propagating well, and supporting well as the direction for service. Let us consider these three in turn.

Administer well: In principle the church is one body with Christ as its head. The church is the body of Christ and the church of every place and people are like the limbs, helping each other as equals. No church, in whatever place or country, can set itself up as head or control the church in other places or countries. The spread of the Gospel began from Jerusalem. Paul began his many missionary journeys from Antioch, but neither the Jerusalem church nor that of Antioch dominated other churches. The apostles established churches from Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and Thessalonica even up to Rome, but all these churches were equal. Paul's guiding principle in establishing a church can be summed up in three points: (1) first preach the gospel; (2) when there are people in a place who have accepted Christ, select from among them those filled with the gifts of the Spirit and of good reputation to serve as bishop, elders, administrators, pastors, etc.; (3) once the church had been established and there were people to take up the tasks of evangelism and pastoral work, Paul would not visit that place any more to preach, lest he build on another's foundation. Obviously at that time, once a church was established in a city- state, it was that church's own responsibility to preach the gospel and minister to the people. This is the "three-self" principle.

Propagate well: in order to successfully carry on the work of self-propagation, it is necessary not only to preach, but to witness through our lives. Our clergy must not only be good at providing spiritual nourishment to the flocks under their care, they must also make strict demands upon themselves to be a model for the masses in all things. They must not only preach about God's love and explain the truth of the Word by exegeting the text; they must also practice what they preach, and serve enthusiastically. In this they must be particularly conscientious in arranging worship, home gatherings and fellowship gatherings; painstakingly guide the training of lay workers and youth; show their care in frequent visits to church members to share in their joys and sorrows; understand their spiritual needs; and give

frequent encouragement and comfort. In this way, our patriotic clergy can better carry out their pastoral work and guide their members, not to be misled by spurious doctrines, but to go forward on the correct spiritual path.

Support well: by increasing revenues from rents, Three-Self and organizations made up of church members have in some places begun some commercial enterprises which contribute to the four modernizations as well as increase the fixed income of the church. Such measures can supplement self-support where need be. However, as a general principle, self-support should rely on voluntary contributions and support from church members. We must continue to expend all possible effort in this area.

When local churches throughout the country are able to fulfill the terms set out by the Joint Standing Committee through loyal service, then the church will be established in accordance with the mind and heart of God and will be able to administer well, propagate well and support well.

In what follows, I would like to talk about how the work of Three-Self in Shaoxing (Zhejiang province) is developing under God's guidance.

The municipal Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement in Shaoxing are not in a leadership position over the provincial level branches of the two organizations nor with regard to local churches. Rather, they are but guiding organs, serving people according to the Lord's teachings. But when Sheng County and Xinchang have asked us to join in fellowship meetings with them, we have gone to preach God's message, to communicate the meaning of three-self patriotism and the religious policy of the Party, and to rebut the heresies of the "Yellers." During such fellowship meetings, patient and painstaking work is carried out vis a vis those believers influenced by the "Yellers" or those who still have objections to Three-Self; as Jesus said, "Take my yoke and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29). Thus we take up the mission of gentle, humble lambs and in love and sincerity, urge ever more believers to follow the three-self path.

Our approach vis a vis those in the city who have been influenced by the "Yellers" is to seek to communicate with them through personal visits, in the hope that they will come to serve God within the church. The spirit of seeking truth from facts should be felt in the church as well. Seeing that we lead Christians in the way of the Spirit and guard a pure faith as well as raising high the banner of three-self, some of them come to realize that Three-Self today conforms to the wishes of Christians. They drop their opposition to Three-Self. Having become uncomfortable with their old position before the Lord, they choose the three-self path anew.

While visiting an elderly church worker we said to him, "If we in Three-Self or in the municipal church are in any way out of line with Biblical teaching, please point this out. We can change." This brother who, like some of us, had opposed Three-Self, is gradually increasing his knowledge of its principles. Here I want to repeat that sharing the gift of eternal life and witness in daily life is the most important thing in the eyes of good Christians.

The Party document "Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question During China's Socialist Period" (Document 19) recommends a similar approach on the part of atheists toward religious believers, ". . . we must understand that it will be fruitless and harmful to use simple coercive methods in dealing with people' ideological and spiritual questions - and this includes religious questions."

The municipal church ordains ministers and in our ordination rite we respect the customs of all former denominations. We do not impose uniformity. In Shaoxing we have seven former denominations joined in a unified worship in the municipal church. Some individuals object to a professional clergy. We undertake to help these people according to Biblical teachings, to enable them to come to a willing acceptance of the rite of ordination. With an ordained minister in the pulpit of the municipal church, the unified service of worship is excellent and has become a model for other churches and unified services.

Our denominational heritage includes Baptists, Anglicans, the China Inland Mission, Seventh Day Adventists, home worship gatherings, and two indigenous independent churches. The offices of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriot Movement are located at the municipal church; thus their guidance is relatively direct and sets an example for the entire city. This example is one of not imposing uniformity in matters of faith; seeking the common ground while reserving differences; of applying the principle of mutual respect in liturgical matters; and of not highlighting or overemphasizing any one denominational viewpoint in the common pulpit. God's message is offered in turns by brothers and sisters from each denominational background who have the gift of preaching. At monthly communion services, the breaking of the bread is celebrated following the afternoon unified worship (on Sundays). Former members of various denominations conduct the two services, the Lord's Supper and the breaking of the bread.

As for baptism, this is taken afternoons by an ordained minister and mornings by a lay preacher. Either immersion or sprinkling is observed at the believer's choice.

Christmas is a solemn festival, except in home gatherings. I was originally a member of a home gathering myself and we did not observe Christmas. But as a leader in Three-Self, I must actively follow the principle of "mutual respect" in all things and take the initiative in supporting activities both financially and by giving of my own energy. In my capacity as chairman of Three-Self, I do take part in the celebration of Christmas, preaching the good news. "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became flesh and died for us. He is our Savior."

We advise former members of home gatherings not to pressure other members of such gatherings to join us, but we also tell them that all Christians are free to come to Christmas celebrations unobstructed. Faith is a private matter; no one has the right to interfere in another's faith. Thus, since the reopening of the church, both groups have been happy. We respect the faith of each person, lay the foundations of unity and thus are all the more able to draw former denominations together and to eliminate the fear that a person's faith will be changed upon joining Three-Self. As a result the municipal church has grown unabated and more Christians have been attracted to the path of Three-Self.

Clergy from throughout the surrounding area are able to work in harmony by the grace of God, though the light each has received differs. Bathed in the Lord's love, without denominational conceptions, they confess only one Christ.

We also select a number of articles and other materials from *Sermon Series*, the *Nanjing Theological Review*, and the *Syllabus* from the correspondence course, and send copies to local churches, to members of local Christian Councils and Three-Self committees, and to those in lay ministry courses. Our goal in doing this is to raise the level of knowledge about Three-Self, to bring the construction of the church in line with the mind of God and to enable clergy and laity to serve God loyally. Our municipal Three-Self and Christian Council spend a bit more money this way but excellent results are achieved. Recently, we have also sent out copies of *Rod and Staff*, because this book, in its coverage of the period from the inception of Three-Self to the present, presents the cream of the insights the elder generation of our clergy and colleagues on Three-Self, raise our understanding of its principles to a higher level and teaches how to go about establishing a church which corresponds to the mind of God.

That we serve in the house of God is due to the grace and mercy of God. If we feel that we have satisfied our debts by service, however, or if in much of our service we have not sought the mind of God, but act on our own rather than follow the Spirit's guidance, we are obstructing the power and blessing of God and in arrears in our service, to God and to our sisters and brothers.

From this day forward, let us strive toward the words Isaiah: "I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy"(1:25); or let us pray as in Psalm 51, verse 10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and a new and right spirit within me." As we find in Luke, where Jesus is teaching by parables, let us be the word that falls on good soil. We must guard good and honest hearts, enduring and strong, as in Hannah's prayer for Samuel, "Therefore I have lent him the Lord, as long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord." Let us, like Samuel, serve in the house of the Lord, lent to the Lord for as long as we live.

May God be glorified in the church as in Christ, forever; ever. Amen.

*Nanjing Theological Review, No. 6 and 7 (September, 1987), p.
translated by Janice Wickeri*

9. On Nanjing Theological Seminary – Chen Zemin

The following article is a report on the work of Nanjing Theological Seminary during 1986 and was presented at the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, August, 1986. Data cited in the report are relevant to the year 1986 and may no longer be accurate.

The Third National Chinese Christian Conference held in October, 1980, marked the beginning of a new era for Chinese Christianity. In order to train young people to take up the work of establishing and governing well a church based on three-self principles, the Conference decided that Nanjing Theological Seminary should resume classes as soon as possible. Under the guidance of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and the China Christian Council, with Party and government assistance, and supported by local churches, Nanjing Seminary convened classes in February, 1981.

Five and a half years have passed since that first group of post-Cultural Revolution students were recruited. During this time, we have enrolled more than 280 students from 26 different provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions. By the grace of God, in the past two years, we have had 188 graduates: 64 in the four-year course* and 7 who have completed their studies in the graduate division. Of the 117 students in the two-year course, 67 have switched to the four-year course to continue their studies, while graduates of the four-year course have been accepted into the graduate program. This means that more than one hundred graduates will be going out to work in churches. Fifteen of these will be employed as teachers in other seminaries. In the past five years, only 12 students have had to leave school. For the Fall semester this year (September, 1986), we will have 177 students: 83 in the two-year course, 77 in the four-year course and 17 graduate students.

Nanjing Seminary's goal is to train young people who love China and the Chinese church, who believe in the truth of the Bible, who maintain the three-self principles, and who are well-rounded spiritually, morally, intellectually, and physically. We hope to mold them into dedicated servants of God who can meet the needs of our growing church. That is to say, candidates for theological training should: love socialist New China, accept the Party's leadership, have purity of faith, adhere to the teachings of the Bible, love God and love humankind. They should also be spiritually and morally mature, in good physical health, have a college education and definite level of Biblical and theological knowledge. Students must also possess the ability to unite their colleagues and fellow Christians to encourage and lead believers along the three-self path so that together we may establish a church suited to the greatness of the new era, a church which is uniquely Chinese. Through their words, faith love and action, they will spread the Gospel. Together with the people of the whole nation, they should contribute to the four modernizations and to world peace, to the betterment of humanity and as witnesses to the glory of God. Besides meeting the urgent needs of the present however, we need to train qualified people in all specialties for the future, people

**The basic two-year course equips students to work as pastors in local churches. Graduates of the four-year course may continue for further study or specialized training.*

who will assume responsibility for theological teaching and research, publishing, church art and music, and relations with Christians overseas.

Many obstacles still stand in the way of these goals. The foundation of the Chinese church is still somewhat weak. After the Cultural Revolution, the educational level of many of the incoming students was low, and the basis of their faith shallow. This causes problems in student selection and in teaching. Our faculty is limited. They did not have a great deal of prior experience in training student according to the aforementioned goals and requirements. For this reason, we were often unable to fulfill our goals in the last few years and many problems still remain. As an expression of your responsibility for this holy task and of your care and concern for the seminary, we would appreciate the opinions and positive suggestions of our colleagues throughout the country to help u improve our work in the future.

(2)

In what follows, I would like to discuss the problems of the last few years and the work we have done.

(1) *General Classes and Religious Classes.* In order to insure that students have an adequate knowledge of Bible and theology and practical training in church work, and at the same time raise their cultural level and political awareness, an appropriate balance of religious and general classes needs to be attained. On the whole religious classes comprise 70% of our curriculum, while general classes make up the remaining 30%. Most of the general classes, such as political studies, are in line with the common curriculum for institutions of higher education. In the politics course, we use the materials used by most colleges in addition to emphasizing patriotism and current political studies. However, we do not offer a course on dialectical materialism.

(2) *Relationship between Spiritual Training and Knowledge.* The seminary is neither a monastery nor a center for religious studies. We want to help students combine spiritual nurture with the study of the Bible and theology. To aid in this, we encourage each student in the habit of morning and evening devotions. In addition, we arrange public worship services, morning and evening prayers, and a variety of prayer meetings and Bible-study groups. Still, we don't want to de-emphasize knowledge and study. Some of our newer students seem to regard growth in the spirit as antithetical to academic work. For such students more knowledge means less love of God. Religious pedagogy must combine every type of knowledge and spiritual growth with the real needs of the church. Thus, we also stress practical areas such as preaching and pastoral work. We must avoid establishing an "ivory tower" divorced from reality. Ideally, we would like to provide a lively study environment with an atmosphere of genuine piety compatible with spiritual growth. We would also like to impart a sense of sacrifice and devotion to the students.

(3) *Unity and Diversity.* The Chinese church has done away with denominational differences and pursues unity. Still, the seminary must maintain the principle of mutual respect toward different points of view with regard to matters of faith, liturgical traditions,

and spiritual practices; and promote understanding and a willingness to learn from others. In this way, we can work toward harmony while avoiding fruitless arguments.

(4) *The Old and the New or Tradition vs. Modernization.* We preserve the truth of Scripture and adapt from tradition what is true and valuable. At the same time, we should be open to the revelation and light of the Holy Spirit in the new era, especially that rich spiritual experience of our Christian people since the founding of our new nation. We should examine and evaluate our experiences. Our traditions have been tainted by the old society. In this new era, we should allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in judging, testing and correcting. The Holy Spirit will lead us "into all truth." Under the Spirit's guidance we will find the rich truth of the Bible and come to a new awareness of God's grace in the present. We should not become complacent and conservative. Rather, we should resist uncritical acceptance of the old.

(5) *Relations with Christians Overseas.* We base our China, but embrace the whole world. We must understand absorb and digest what is of value in Chinese tradition, for we believe that it is a gift given to us by God. In modern China too is true, good and beautiful is a gift from God. From our contemporary experience, we can begin to appreciate magnificent grace and revelations. Only when the seed of the gospel has been planted in the fertile soil of our nation's culture taken deep root there, will it grow and bear fruit that many people may come to understand and accept it.

Of course, this does not imply a closed-door mentality anti-foreignism. We acknowledge that there is much valuable fruit to be found in Biblical and theological study done overseas. We should gain an understanding of it, absorb it and use it to enrichment and improvement. But we must be able to discriminate among foreign things those which are wrong or which are not suited to China. An understanding of the world is helpful in broadening one's vision and knowledge and in developing one's critical faculties.

At Nanjing Seminary, we have the opportunity to meet many friends and scholars from overseas. Such contacts promote understanding and friendship. However, we must guard against the tendency to worship foreign things. We must first gain self-respect and self-knowledge by seeking truth from facts. We must also publicize our three-self stance and help to implement religious policy. We should, for instance, emphasize Chinese church history as a means of understanding our own past and present. This would also aid in the development of uniquely Chinese teaching materials for all our classes: Bible, theology, doctrine, pastoral care; even church music and art. The Nanjing Seminary library is relatively better than those of our other theological schools. But we must learn to use selectively and critically many of the books and materials from Hong Kong and abroad which it contains.

(6) *Improve Three-Self Studies.* Three-Self studies should be emphasized, especially study of the principle of self-prop. The seminary itself is an important instrument for the success of self-propagation, so the spirit of three-self should inform all facets of our curriculum. We should begin a special class focusing on Three-Self *per se*. We have offered a class in Three-Self Theology a number of professors explored with the students all aspects of the subject from various angles. In addition, another course in Three-Self utilizing Three-Self documents will allow students to understand the history, significance and necessity of the Movement. There is

still much work to be done in this area, and we welcome the opinions and suggestions of our colleagues.

(7) *Theological Education for the 1980s.* We are now educating a new generation of theological students who differ in many ways from their predecessors. These new students were born and grew up after Liberation or during the Cultural Revolution era. They have no experience of life in Old China with which to compare life in New China. The chaos of the Cultural Revolution dominates their memories. They do not have sufficient knowledge of the superiority of socialism and have only superficial views on the problems of reform. They have also been influenced by unhealthy currents of thought that have recently infiltrated from abroad. At the same time, the rapid growth of science and technology and the information explosion have instilled in them a desire for freedom, a thirst for knowledge and intellectual openness. They may easily become skeptical and resistant to old rules and customs. The faculty will have to discuss how best to train these students.

At present, in addition to spiritual growth and course work, we encourage a wide-range of extracurricular activities from special interest groups to discussion groups and student meetings. Through these organizations, we attempt to cultivate responsibility and love for school, church, and nation. Although our dormitories are reasonably comfortable, we try to stress a simple life that is built on hard work and mutual help. We feel that seminary students ought to avoid a life of excessive comfort or a life-style above that of ordinary church workers. Rules and regulations are a necessity of campus life, but at the same time a sense of self-responsibility must be engendered. Each class has a faculty advisor and mature students are chosen to serve as advisors for class organizations. A student committee coordinates all aspects of these extracurricular programs. In this way, we are attempting to instill a sense of discipline and order in the seminary, but we still have much to learn.

(3)

The following are some areas in which further improvement is necessary.

(1) *Recruitment of Students.* Students at Nanjing Seminary have been recommended to the municipal and provincial levels of the two national bodies by churches all over the country. Many of these churches take this responsibility seriously and take pains to choose carefully. In some areas preliminary training is conducted before a student is recommended for the examination. Students chosen in this way are generally good. But we have also found that some students have little background in the faith or the church and are ill-prepared to study theology. To train these students often proves to be a waste of effort and money and results in a loss to both church and seminary. Thus, it is important that we have the cooperation of all churches in the conscientious recruitment of qualified students.

(2) *Establishing a Curriculum.* In 1983, we considered establishing an intensive short course to train church workers more quickly. At that time, our first- and second-year classes became components of this specialized program. We also planned to select some members of this group for continued theological study. Thus, the second year of the shorter course had to be self-contained and practical while also providing a foundation for those students who

would continue in their studies. But there is a contradiction between these two goals. The difficulty impinges on the ratio of regular courses to theology courses for these two second-year groups and on problems of continuity in moving from a superficial to a deeper level in the theology courses.

The second year of the two-year course must both raise the students' general educational level and provide them with sufficient ability in Bible, theological knowledge, preaching and practical church work. In such circumstances it is difficult to avoid spending too much time in too many classes, placing a great burden on students and faculty. The second year of the four-year course (and the third and fourth years) must continue to build on the foundation laid in the two-year course, expand the students' knowledge and at the same time avoid repetition. It thus becomes necessary to offer some new courses. Unfortunately, attempting to achieve these two goals in one year has proved to be an unacceptable burden on both the students and the faculty. We have also considered accepting graduates from the two-year courses in other seminaries into our four-year course, but this involves additional problems.

At present, our graduate students are selected mainly from graduates of the four-year course. Their four years of theological training prepare them for specialized research. From this group will come the seminary teachers of tomorrow. Another group is comprised of students who have graduated from a regular college or university, but who lack Biblical and theological knowledge and church experience. There should be a systematized course for these students, but such a two-track system would entail other contradictions and difficulties.

(3) *Relations with Churches and Pastoral Fieldwork.* Our students come from all over the country but because they spend long time at seminary, it is easy for them to lose contact with their home congregations. We would like to see local churches have more frequent contact with the students they have recommended and show their care for them. Formerly, we permitted the student to return to his or her home church for one semester of practical work. This was helpful, but had the disadvantage of interrupting the student's academic work. Now, thanks to the cooperation of the Nanjing churches, we plan to have most of the students work in local congregations during the academic year. When they return home for vacation, we hope that their home church can provide them with further opportunities for practical experience.

In other ways, too, we feel the churches have responsibilities and rights with regard to the continuing education of seminary graduates. We would like to suggest the need for a probationary period after graduation in which the student would continue the training process under supervision. Thus, all graduates of our two- and four-year courses and graduate students would receive a certificate on the completion of their seminary program, and then would return to their home churches for a period of one year. If the congregation approved of the student's work after that time, a diploma would be issued. We hope this new policy will be supported by the churches.

(4) *Placement of Graduates.* Placement is primarily the responsibility of the provincial or municipal branches of the two national bodies which recommended the students in the beginning.

One-hundred-five students from our last two graduating classes have gone into church work, while the rest have remained for further studies. A small number of these could not, for a number of reasons, find an appropriate position. This is a loss both for the students themselves and for the church. In addition to training pastors for all parts of the country, Nanjing Seminary prepares teachers for the other seminaries and supplies specialized personnel for the national church bodies. We hope that each of these organizations will take our nation-wide responsibilities into consideration in their requests for personnel. We also ask that the provincial and municipal organizations discuss the apportioning of students among themselves on the basis of their real needs.

(5) *Teaching Materials and Teacher Training.* Like the other seminaries, we have had trouble finding suitable materials for our religion classes. Old books or those from abroad can only serve as references. We need materials that are based on the unique characteristics of the Chinese church and its needs. Representatives from all the seminaries will need to cooperate in the development of these materials and solve questions of editorial rights and copy right.

Qualified teachers are also needed. Nanjing Seminary has more than ten teachers for its theology classes, but many of these are growing older and have too much to do. Because they are stretched so thin, the quality of teaching has suffered and we have been unable to offer some necessary classes. Thus, we have to pay attention to training a future generation of seminary professors. Of course, we will have to regulate the number of professors in conjunction with the other seminaries.

We thank God that there are now ten seminaries in China. This year, we will be able to accommodate 500 students. Thus we can speed up the task of training pastoral workers and promote research into self-propagation.

Nanjing Seminary has a sisterly relationship with the other seminaries, and we should humbly seek to learn from their experiences. After all, we have the same mission and confront the same problems. Last summer at the Mo Gan Shan Conference on theological education, we discussed our problems and pledged future cooperation under the guidance of our two national bodies. We agreed then on some concrete measures to improve theological education and to advance the church in China. I pray that we can continue to build on this foundation by openly sharing our experiences and mutually supporting one other.

*Collected Documents of The Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, p.100.
Translated by Craig Moran*

10. From Three Self to Three Well – Sun Xipei

Having overcome the basic problems by turning from "being governed" to "self-government," from "being supported" to "self-support" and from "being propagated" to "self-propagation," is there any need to further develop the Three-Self Movement? If so, how do we reach a new depth? These are issues already placed before us for our careful consideration and action.

I believe, as the Fourth National Christian Conference (August 1986) has already made clear, that the task of three-self is now entering a new stage from self-government, self-support and self-propagation to governing well, supporting well and propagating well. The main emphasis of our work today is to implement the spirit of three-self in every aspect of building the church. A well-organized church with lively Christians is attractive, consolidating and able to move on to greater unity. The leadership of the church is like the engine of the train, leading the mass of Christians on the track of "love country and love church."

The following are some of my thoughts on how to further build up the church in China under the three-self principle:

(1) On "Governing Well"

The growth of the church has been phenomenal. This situation has been most prevalent in the countryside where there are numerous new Christians, but not enough clergy to provide pastoral care. With the disappearance of denominations former ecclesiastical structures and forms of church polity have not been in effect. Without new church structures to replace the old, confusion and mismanagement have occurred in many areas. There are cases of people being admitted to church membership indiscriminately in the absence of order and constitution. Therefore one task of "governing well" is to have a system and a structure that are relevant to actual local church life and at a minimum include definitions of the following: 1) faith, 2) congregational life, 3) the sacraments, 4) the Christian ministry, 5) church polity and organization and 6) ordination. Central to the process of forming church order and structures is the principle of "mutual respect for one another's different faith traditions" and "seeking major common ground while reserving minor differences." At the moment several provincial Christian Councils and Three-Self committees have been working on these things. Without such order and structure to rely on, we cannot improve our church organization.

(2) On "Propagating Well"

In the past the meaning and significance of "three-self" was based on a primarily political perspective, which was quite correct then and is still relevant. However, is the emphasis on "three-self" only a political necessity? We should probe further to seek biblical, theological and ecclesiastical bases to deepen the understanding of "three-self" as a pre-requisite to "propagating well."

Although the term "three-self" is not found in the Scriptures, neither is "trinity." Nevertheless, the spirit and principle of three-self is present. For example, the recording of the birth of Christ in the fourth Gospel is different from the accounts of the other three Gospels. Why did John express the incarnation as "the logos became flesh?" The reason is quite clear. Since the Gospel of John was written at the end of the first century, it was intended for gentiles with a Greek instead of a Jewish cultural background. Therefore John used the word "logos" (a term familiar to the Greeks) to propagate the Gospel. Isn't this an example of the implementation of the principle of indigenization of the church? Doesn't it illustrate the necessity for contextualization? Moreover, the decision that the Gentile churches were not to be subjected to the Jerusalem Church made in the First Jerusalem Conference was guided by the Holy Spirit and based on the three-self principle. Gentiles could become Christians directly, without having to go through Judaism. Again as we look at the church throughout the ages we see that although they all belong to the body of Christ, they have their separate functions. Each related to Christ as the head of the church. Without individual character and particularity, there cannot be any universality. "Uniformity" can never manifest the "immeasurable richness of Christ."

There are many ways to explore the meaning of "self-propagation." Therefore I feel that the theological probing which began in the 1950s should continue and go deeper. There should be a task force on theological research, composed of representatives from the present ten seminaries. The responsibility of the seminaries is not limited only to producing qualified church workers. They are also to bear fruit in the study of theology, and step by step to search for a more comprehensive theology with Chinese characteristics that are in tune with Chinese realities.

To improve the work of "self-propagation," it is urgent that we raise the standard of preaching of those who are presently leading the churches. Since a special characteristic of the contemporary Chinese church is its shortage of ministers, the emphasis in ministry is often placed on the preaching pulpit. The concern is to preach good sermons, to deliver a relevant message that is in harmony with current realities and that meets the needs of Christians. All these are areas of research for the task of "self-propagation." Therefore the church should give priority to strengthening continuing education of ministers through regularly scheduled seminars on self-propagation and on holding on-going spring and autumn retreats for pastors.

Another important aspect of self-propagation is lay leadership training. The Chinese church is characterized by its large number of volunteer church workers. As there are so many Christians and not enough ministers, much of the church work (including preaching), especially in meeting points, is done by volunteers without formal theological education. Their exposition of the Scriptures can be fragmented and even misleading. Many have plenty of enthusiasm but little knowledge of the Bible. Yet they most often serve as preachers in the meeting points and even occupy church pulpits. The church must pay more attention to their nurture, and set up various types of training classes at different levels. I believe that the only way to help meeting points get on the right track is to train qualified church workers. Only when the leaders are well trained can they keep the flock from waywardness.

Still another point of doing "self-propagation" well is related to publication. To raise the standard and quality of our ministers and church members, we must resist the infiltrating activities of anti-China groups who send harmful literature from abroad. At the same time we must improve our own publications and literary work.

(3) On "Supporting Well"

Among the three "wells" it should be noted that "supporting well" is the least difficult, since churches in China operate on small budgets. Also most of the present clergy live on pensions they are already receiving from previous work units. Their retirement benefits include medical care and other insurance. They serve the Lord with commitment, some entirely on a voluntary basis and some with only minimum stipends. But this situation will change as the number of newer, younger clergy increases in the future. We must realize that Christians in present day China love their church very much. With the national economy improving, people give generously to the church and this has helped to meet the financial needs of the churches. Of course there are churches in the rural areas that still face some difficulties in self-support. With gradual improvement in the countryside, they too will solve their problems eventually. As long as the church is able to nurture the spiritual life of the congregation and minister to the needs of the people, the church in China will not only be able to support itself, but to do it well.

Presently some local churches have started enterprises such as factories and shops. While participating in the four modernizations, they also solve the problem of their own self-support. Their intentions are good. However, according to the experiences of churches in my province, commercial ventures should be carried out with caution. If economic trends are blindly followed without careful consideration of proper conditions and possibilities, the result can be counter-productive. The church should encourage Christians to participate in the construction of the two civilizations (material and spiritual) primarily by being faithful as God's people in their own professions. At the same time, the church can make a contribution to society by providing needed services to the community such as sponsoring a guest house, a medical clinic, a nursery school or a home for the elderly. These services are in accordance with the teaching and tradition of the church as well as being a partial solution to the problem of self-support. More important is that through taking part in the construction of the two civilizations the church's image can be improved.

These are my very superficial comments and, like throwing out an old brick to attract precious jade pieces from others, I hope to alert my colleagues and fellow Christians to these issues and to stimulate further discussion.

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translated by Jean Woo

11. An Appeal to Mr. Wang Mingdao – Jiang Peifen

In the nineteen-twenties, Mr. Wang Mingdao was invited to preach at a revival meeting of the church in Jiangyin. At that time I was only a youngster in primary school. Although I had little understanding of Biblical truths then, I had great admiration for Mr. Wang. Later, after my rebirth by the grace of Christ and being called to dedicate myself to his work, I liked very much to read Mr. Wang's writings such as his *Spiritual Food Quarterly*, and *The Christian's Way of Living*. I felt them to be spiritually uplifting and specially appreciated their emphasis on salvation, rebirth and witness by life and deeds. God used Mr. Wang greatly for the propagation of the gospel. Mr. Wang was my example on the path of serving the Lord. But, one day, it was reported abroad that the communists had killed Mr. Wang. You were requested to declare that that was a rumor. But you refused to do it. That surprised me. My faith in you was shaken a bit by that.

I have always had Mr. Wang in my prayers. Whenever I remember Mr. Wang in my prayer, I cannot help thinking of Mr. Wang's deceased close colleague, Rev. Wang Zhen, and his powerful witness. Rev. Wang Zhen stood against the People's Government and went willingly to prison to suffer for his Lord, - all "for the sake of Christian faith". But in the course of time, he humbly let the light of the Holy Spirit dawn upon him. He came to himself and said to his colleagues and followers: "In the past I thought I was suffering for the sake of the Christian faith. The truth, however, was that I was foolish and proud and seeking suffering myself. Christ will not take it if I try to put this suffering to his account." So, he once again offered himself entirely to Christ. What great witness he made for Christ in his closing years. The spiritual journey Rev. Wang went through has been that of many other brothers and sisters.

We have seen with our own eyes how God has turned a nation bullied and enslaved by others into one that is independent and run by the people ourselves, and how God has enabled his believers in China to build up a church that is Biblical and Chinese. How I have wished that Mr. Wang Mingdao would be like us and offer to God his thanksgiving and praise. At one time, some people assumed that the Chinese church could not survive without "help" from outside. But, God be praised, the Chinese church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, after a time of "tearing down," has stood up with her repentance before God, and the Holy Spirit has led us to move ahead once again. In 1956 the call was sounded to build up the Body of Jesus Christ on the soil of China - a great and glorious mission given to us by God himself.

After 1957 our work was more and more restricted by the "leftist" line which culminated in the Cultural Revolution during which our churches were closed down and our colleagues suffered greatly, especially Three-Self leaders. Yet, it was then that Christians got into closer relation with the Lord. There were no public meetings any more but small gatherings for worship and sharing grew in number. The Risen Lord was with us still and the church gained in vitality. Today, denominational cleavages and mutual attacks are unheard of. We adhere to the principle of mutual respect in matters of faith, find mutual enrichment in our knowledge of Christ, work in one mind for the prosperity of the cause of the gospel, with the result that the number of believers has been steadily growing. Since 1979, churches have increased from one to over 4,000, not counting the tens of thousands of other meeting points all over

the country. In recent years over two million Bibles have been printed and distributed. They are still in short supply, so are the *New Hymnals*, the *Tian Feng Monthly*, the *Syllabus Quarterly* for leaders of home Christian groups, the *Sermon Series*, the *Mana on the Spiritual Way*, the *Lilies of the Field*, and so on. Also in recent years theological schools have increased from one to ten, with over 500 full-time students enrolled. In the last three years over 200 graduates have been sent to God's vineyards in all parts of China. During the same period there have been over 500 ordinations, one-sixth being women. The number of voluntary church workers is uncountable. The work of training lay workers is continuing all over China.

Our church is still weak and is faced with many problems old and new, but is moving ahead with vitality, being renewed by the Spirit everyday.

A friend of mine who took a hostile attitude at one time to the Three-Self Movement said, "If the Lord is not pleased with Three-Self, how can millions of people turn to the Lord and join the church? Three-Self is giving Christians the power to bear witness among the people. God is clearly with the Chinese church and sends his grace to all those who belong to him."

The church is Christ's. Its various parts are not to try to control or dominate each other but are to exist as members of the same body, serving and loving each other. These truths are certainly familiar to Mr. Wang. Is it then right to attack Christians working for self-government, self-support and self-propagation as being "unspiritual" and "without life?" Mr. Wang faced trial and received a sentence entirely because of his stand and activities against the People's Government. But Mr. Wang goes so far as to say now that it was the Three-Self leaders who put him in prison. I am sure this is a false accusation. Some of these leaders did try to reason with Mr. Wang in trying to win him to the side of Three-Self, but this had nothing to do with his imprisonment. I know how hard the leaders of the Three-Self Movement worked for the rehabilitation of pastors and how many of these leaders themselves suffered from a fate worse than that of Mr. Wang.

I recall how several old prestigious church leaders called on you to talk things over with the hope of helping you to see God's will for the Chinese church and enabling the gospel to be heard in our country. What you did to them was to bang the door and accuse them of having abandoned their loyalty to Christ. What was left for them to do was and is only to pray and to wait, hoping that the Holy Spirit who has moved all of us will move you too.

So many of the brothers and sisters you helped spiritually in the early days suffered a lot under your leadership. But, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, they have come around in penitence to love Christ more dearly and have re-dedicated themselves to the work of Christ's church. They testify that at one time their spiritual eyes were dimmed and could not recognize the Risen Lord who actually had never left them. They are now scattered in different parts of China, but are one in their devotion to Christ and, I am sure, in their earnest prayer that you may change.

In the early fifties when a brother who loves the Lord moved from Nanjing to Beijing, he sincerely wanted him to see you, to report to you our insights from gracious God, with the

hope that you would also be moved by the same Holy Spirit to join us in the building up of Christ's Body. Unfortunately, this brother who carried with him all our love for you in Jesus Christ was rejected by you and was not even allowed to take part in the breaking of the bread with you. Maybe you have forgotten this. This brother is now over eighty, still going strong in the work of the gospel. Today, over thirty years later, I am making the same appeal to you, Mr. Wang. Please drop all your prejudices and look at what God is doing in the vast land of China and in the church here, and join us in thanking and praising him. Human life is not long. I earnestly pray that Mr. Wang will join with the rest of God's children and share in the grace and blessings of God to the Chinese church, raise high Jesus Christ and his cross and lead many more souls to his fold.

August 1987

ESSAYS FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CHINA

12. The Four Marks of the Catholic Church – Lu Xuedi

Ecclesiology is one branch of theology, and the four marks of the church are one aspect of ecclesiological studies.

The four marks of the church, that it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, were first set forth in the Nicene Creed which was approved at the Council of Constantinople in the year 381, and are recited by the priest today while celebrating mass : I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. These have been primary tenets of the faith adhered to by our church for over a thousand years.

The Practical Significance of Ecclesiological Studies

I would first like to speak briefly about the practical significance of ecclesiological studies, following that with a general discussion of the four marks of the church.

In a lecture given at Weston Theological Seminary in Massachusetts where he received an honorary doctorate in April 1979, the best-known contemporary Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, proposed a division of church history into three periods. Other contemporary scholars, speaking from a theological perspective, also believe there are three important periods in theological history. The first was the very brief period of Jewish Christianity, which was purely ecclesiological. The second period, while the church was developing in a specific culture was longer, a church epoch based on Greco-European civilization and culture. The most important result of this period was an articulation of a theology of Christ (Christology). In the third period, which has just begun, to use the words of Fr. Rahner, the life of the church will be enveloped by the atmosphere of the entire world (cf. *Collectanea Theologica*, No. 50).

Neither Karl Rahner's divisions of church history, nor the main points of the various theologies articulated in each period, ever depart from a discussion of the nature of ecclesiology. Although the *Summa Theologica* of the medieval scholastic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, never directly discussed works dealing with questions regarding the nature (essence) of the church, we can say that Aquinas indirectly included ecclesiology in his other works.

Therefore, we would like to propose that it is of practical significance to introduce and discuss the nature of ecclesiology, particularly while contemporary theologians are energetically propounding theologies of the Holy Spirit. This is because, speaking from a theological perspective, the Holy Spirit and the church are intimately related.

At the same time we wish to say that the church from its inception has itself been the symbol of preaching the truth to the world and to all humanity; thus, in order to "keep up with the times", we must proceed from "the sign of the times" and undertake a self-

examination of our ecclesiology. For each of us believers who live within the church, and especially for those who have committed themselves to it through their vocations, this would be of profound historical significance. To begin our theological "self-examination" with the four marks of the church would have important practical significance. The words of St. Cyprian, "Whoever cannot say that the church is his mother, cannot say that God is his Father," surely have relevance and function in the church today.

Since our topic is "the four marks of the church," it is essential for us to deepen our understanding of the intrinsic nature of the word "church". The word "church" evolved from the Greek language, where the original meaning was "an assembly of people." If all the people in a certain place were called together for a meeting to discuss a public matter regarding that district, the assembled people were called, "the people who are called forth". When the group which was translating the Septuagint Bible from Hebrew into Greek gathered together, they made use of this phrase - "the assembly of the people of God." Thus they gave the term a new, religious meaning. At the same time we also learn from this that from the beginning the church has had its dynamic aspect and most importantly that it is a dynamic entity - the assembly of a group. Of course, the "assembly" of the Bible was not one called together to discuss some political matter like any ordinary meeting, nor could just any person call an assembly together for any reason; rather, the church was the assembly of people called together by God, the assembly of those especially chosen - the church of God. To put it briefly, these were people of God coming together in a meeting in response to God's call. This was fully experienced by the earliest groups of Christian believers. Thus, at the time of the founding of the church, there was also a name by which this group was called: community of faith -the assembly of believers. This shows even more clearly that the organization formed by this group of believers in God, was to be a testimony to their own faith and that they lived by faith. The situation was such that "wherever there were Christians, there was the embryonic church."

After this introduction to the meaning of the word "church," we will discuss in depth each of the four marks of the church.

The First Mark: the Church is One

It is without question that Jesus Christ, the founder of the church, did not found many churches, but only one. But, with the passage of time, parts of the body of this church became disjointed, and what had originally been akin to a beautifully painted porcelain vase fell to the ground and broke into a hundred pieces through people's carelessness. Then each of the broken parts of the body began to speak on its own: My church is the one true church founded by the head (Jesus Christ).

We know that the schism between the Western and Eastern churches came in the eleventh century, and then the Western church split again in the sixteenth century. These two great breaks in the church led to the formation of Christian sects and their dispersion everywhere. In the history of our church this is a cause of grief for us and a matter of deep regret. The key factor in these splits was failure to agree on matters of organization, liturgy or faith. They also reflected serious national, racial and territorial conflicts over politics and power.

In "Mystici Corporis," Pope Pius XII said, there is only one church of Christ, and it is the Roman Catholic Church; aside from this church there is no true church." But time and circumstances change. Today, forty years later, we cannot help but ask : What does this "one" represent? Where does it come from? Do not other churches belong to this "one?" Exactly what is its definition? According to Aristotelian Philosophy, the definition of "one" is: The inner essence of that which is called "one" is indivisible, but externally there are distinctions. Actually this definition still does not touch on the nature of the unity of the church. In the history of theology in the church there have been many views of the "nature of unity": There is both the dynamic internal state, and the static, external state. This is because the emphasis in theological development has responded to the needs of each age. For example, before the Second Vatican Council, theology emphasized the externals, stressing unity with the Pope, unity of administration, etc. But at the time of Vatican II, many persons among the Catholic delegates and theologians from every nation, strongly expressed criticisms of institutionalization and other theological views about the church. They developed new theological viewpoints in an attempt to create a balance to this emphasis on externals. They wished to go more deeply into the internal factors, saying that the source of the "oneness" of the church is God, just as the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, wrote: "There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). The seven "unities" which Paul wrote about here are the factors which impel us in the direction of "oneness" in the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ compared the church to a vineyard (John 15:1-6), a piece of land (ICor. 3:9), and a house built on rock (Mt. 21:42); at the same time Christ was profoundly aware that only when his church was internally unified could it survive. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus said: "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand" (Mt. 12:25). We have already said that the church was produced of dynamic factors , nor is its singularity a piece of granite. Oneness evolves dynamically; "unity" of the church comes from God's power and his calling.

Another important aspect of the oneness of the church, the fact that the church is made up of many believers, demonstrates its mark of unity. As pointed out above, the church in fact consists of many sects. But we must understand that this phenomenon of sectarianism comes from human factors in society, certainly not from God. We should also know that Christ wants unity, and that he prayed for it. His beloved disciple John spent an entire chapter describing our Lord's prayer prior to his suffering: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (John 17:21-23). What Jesus wanted was "unity." Conversely, as was noted above, the one church which Christ established, for many human and social reasons, produced numerous divisions as history evolved, which led to the many sects which exist today in Christ's church, each going its own way. But we remain certain that the churches of those separated brethren, whether few or many, are still joined together in the seven "unities" of St. Paul (Eph. 4:4-6). If we "open the windows" we can then see that the contemporary church

has already begun a movement toward unity. People are doing their utmost to seek unity among the Christian churches. After months and years of delicate repair work by skilled craftsmen, this porcelain vase, glazed in colors by the hands of Christ himself and broken into pieces by humankind, is being restored so that it will once more show forth its original luster. Is this not the "unity" which Jesus desired (John 17:20-26)? Is this not precisely what St. Paul asked for with his seven "unities?" It is difficult these days to say that the theory "There is no salvation outside the church" is representative of church doctrine. It is hard to get people of this generation to accept this kind of rigid attitude; moreover, the scholars of that time did not say this.

On the one hand, although the church has emphasized that the universal church of Jesus Christ is the confluence point of salvation, on the other hand, the church acknowledges that many sacred and truthful elements do exist outside the Roman Catholic Church.

The Second Mark: the Church is Holy

The purpose of religion is to lead persons to be virtuous and holy. The holiness of the Catholic church points to the power to make people holy which the church possesses. This is not due to any merit on the part of the people, but to the promise of God. God has not only "before the creation of the world already chosen us in Christ, and predestined us to be his children," he has also promised never to abandon the church, and in his grace to be with the church every moment. The purpose is to bring people close to God, and to be united to Him (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No. 3, Second Vatican Council*).

St. Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). In this passage the apostle Paul seems to be saying that our church should be free from sin during the time of history. In fact, we all know that this is not the case : the church is really sinful. In the time of the church fathers some people described our church as Eve, or the sinful woman of Samaria, etc. We also know that when the church of that time spread into Greece it was sullied by the taint of materialism; and when it spread to Rome it was colored by legalism. Moreover, this church of ours is itself an institution formed of many sinners; and in its inner life all of its believers are guilty of sins, whether many or few, large or small.

Since our church is an institution formed of a group of sinners, and since this church itself has surely sinned (in failing to care for the poor, in aligning itself with the rich, etc.) and since in this church there are certainly many sinners (I Tim. 5:20), isn't it a contradiction for this sinful church to call itself holy? Where does this holiness come from? Is it as Pope Pius XII said, that the church is holy because it has a holy institution, a holy liturgy, and a holy administration? Is it because our Catholic Church has always had holy men and women? If this is the case, then why did Pope Paul VI make an exception at Kampala, Uganda in mentioning the martyrs of the Anglican church?

We must divide our response to these questions into two parts. On the one side is subjective holiness, with man holding onto his free will. All of us who have come face to face with the saving grace of God have the responsibility of believing in God and loving humankind, to make continual progress on the path of holiness, and to draw near to God. On the other hand there is objective holiness, which has nothing to do with man's free will, but with the grace of God himself, who is full of grace. For example, a holy tablet has objective holiness, but not necessarily subjective holiness.

Although the church has, in the course of its long history, sometimes shown itself to be a sinful church, because of God's grace "long ago" promised, it will never completely betray Jesus. As we have already said, God has a plan of salvation, he gives the infinite goodness within himself to all humankind, and this plan can never fail or go bankrupt.

From all this it can be seen that humankind has "already" received salvation, has "already" received holiness, and that God's blessings are always freely given to all persons in every time and place. God's grace requires our response; faced with God's grace, we can either accept or reject it; but the fact of our acceptance or denial cannot impede the church. This is the sign of this holy plan of salvation. The church, in receiving this plan of salvation, replies only "yes", never "no." The people of the church can reply "yes" together to God's plan of salvation, but this does not exclude the presence of sinners in the church. Because of this, each person's salvation is an individual matter, which does not affect God's grand plan of salvation. On this point St. Thomas cites the first letter of John: "If we say we have no sin, then we deceive ourselves." So the church in today's world is not on the road to the heavenly kingdom "without blemish or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:26), but needs continual reformation; its soul is in profound need of constant repentance and renewal.

The holy church is constituted by people, and becomes the church of God by the gift of the grace of God. Despite the extent of sinfulness in the church, it is still pure and holy; and although it is pure and holy, sin is still rampant in the church. Jesus himself predicted that in his own wheat fields (the church) there would be weeds; he permitted the weeds and young shoots of grain to grow up together (Mt. 13:24). St. Augustine, in explaining the church's holiness said: "This earthly church is a mixed institution, which includes both the righteous and sinners; although they differ in spirit in form they are together." He believed that "a thorough-going separation" between the righteous and sinners, "must await the final days." (cf. *Compendium de Patrologie, Vol. II, p.635*).

Hence, the presence of bad persons in the church of Jesus Christ in today's world is unavoidable. But the mark of holiness of the church is not lost because of this; we cannot attribute sinfulness to the church itself. In view of this fact, the church, as it progresses on its journey, continually cries out, "Holy, holy holy, Lord God almighty. The heavens are full of your glory. Long live God on high," just as the crowds of Jews surrounded our Lord as he made his glorious entrance to the capital city, praising God and his bride the holy church.

The Third Mark: the Church is Catholic

First we will do an etymological analysis of the Chinese translation of the word "catholic" or universal (*gong*). The original Greek word meant "universal." But the converse is not "private," because in Chinese the common phrase "*da gong wu si*" meaning "impartiality," is used to express the mutual antithesis of these two. Here, the opposite of *gong* (catholic, universal) is "particularity," usually indicating "all." To say that universal means widespread is an important point, because the Catholic Church is open to the entire world, to all people of the world regardless of race, color, boundary nationality, wealth or status. It thus transcends all earthly limits of time and place (Mark 16:15). In foreign languages, "catholica" already had this meaning of universality; it was applied to the Catholic Church and is translated into Chinese as *Tianzhu Jiao*.

As noted above, the universality or catholicity of the church transcends time and space. This is because it proclaims the saving grace of God and the good news of Jesus Christ, and in essence this is neither a human product nor a crystallization of culture. At the same time, Christ wants all elements of his church to be made universally manifest in every place. The church does not pervert culture. Rather through its presence in every time and place, the church will purify and raise up a culture, so that the saving grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ will permeate all humanity. Speaking from this perspective, the church's mark of catholicity confirms both the transcendence and the immanence of our church.

As the apostles preached the gospel they also stressed the catholicity of the church. St. Paul, who because of his vigorous preaching to non-Jews gained the name "apostle to the gentiles," said of those who were baptized in Christ that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). In the time of the church fathers, the famous St. Cyprian's "theory of the universality of the church" provided a wealth of insight. His use of "catholic" sometimes refers to the whole church, sometimes to the true church (local or universal). Both meanings were quite popular at that time. However, in his book, *On the Unity of the Church* (this book was written after he was nominated bishop, March 251, but before he returned to Carthage) he emphasizes that "catholic" means the whole church. "This church is one, and it is universal, and this concept of universality is not created by the bishop of Carthage."

For most people today, catholic means the universal nature of the church, and unity means the source or origin of the church. But people in the time of the church fathers, not clearly understanding this point, emphasized only the "catholicity of the church." At the same time they frequently mixed the church's unity and catholicity together, in the words of John of Chrysostom, "because it (meaning unity) is the foundation stone of the entire world."

The universality of the church established by Jesus is not due to its being a federated church; nor is this universal church to be measured by standards of its magnitude, its numerous members, or its long history. In the church today it is understood that any church is universal which bears all the elements of Jesus. When a church has all that has been given by Jesus, in every age and place in which it appears, it will not display just one or another aspect of the church, but the whole body of the church will be found in every church in every place. The church in every place is the universal church. Even Martin Luther was reluctant to call his church the "Lutheran denomination" after dividing the church.

And so the church became catholic, not because it in fact externally embraces all nations and all peoples, but because of its very essence. Because of this seed of Jesus (Luke 7:4-15) it has been able to spread to every corner of the world to sprout and grow. From the original mustard seed it could develop into a great, flourishing tree - "the Catholic Church throughout the world" (*The Records of the Martyrs*, Polycarp, 8.1). This ancient tradition has become fact in reality as well as in name, having become "all under heaven" (*tian xia wei gong*). Today the banners of Christ, the crosses on the steeples of the churches, are flying on the five continents and four oceans. Beneath these crosses can be found people of all colors, races, languages and social classes - all enjoy the saving grace of Jesus Christ in the same church family, forming a church "universal under heaven" which was truly established by Jesus Christ. St. John of Chrysostom said : "The people of Rome know that the people of India are their flesh and blood."

From this we can see that the catholicity of the church is an integrated, organic concept, based on the unity of the church, and resulting in its worldwide universality.

The Fourth Mark: the Church is Apostolic

The church was handed down to us from the apostles, the significance of which is that, since the origin of leadership was apostolic, then the nature of our church is apostolic; or it can be said that, since the church was founded by the apostles, it has come down to us directly from them. It is well-known that when Jesus began his public ministry he chose twelve of his disciples as his core strength, and their names are recorded in the four gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles (Peter first, Judas at the end, and the others in various orders, see Mt. 10:2-4, Mk. 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13). But in addition to these twelve disciples, St. Luke, in the Book of Acts, also records these names: "Barnabas and the apostle Paul" (Acts 14:14). In his letters St. Paul also used the word apostle, "For I am the least of the apostles-unfit to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15:9); "I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles" (2Cor. 11:5). From this we can see that apostolicity in New Testament times did not merely refer to twelve men, but had already taken on an extended meaning. Does the term "apostle" apply only to twelve men ? Why can't others beyond those twelve also be called "apostles?" Basically, what does it mean to be apostolic? Where does this usage come from? To answer these questions we must first understand the general meaning of the word "apostle."

The original Greek meaning of apostle (*zong to* in Chinese), was "those who are sent on a mission," or "messengers;" often it referred to the crew of a boat, or a group of migrants, a passport, or a bill of lading. It was never used to refer to a single person. It should be noted that in Jesus' time no one was called "apostle" by the Jews. The term came into use in the church at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second (the latter apostolic period). Luke, especially, uses it thirty-four times (six times in the Gospel of Luke; twenty-eight times in the Acts of the Apostles), while St. Paul uses it twenty-nine times (including five times in his letters). We say that the apostles borrowed the term, but it was already in use to some extent within the church of the time, often indicating "the messengers of the church" (2Cor. 8:23), "apostles of the church" (Acts 14:4), and "those who are sent" (John

13:16). In the Greek language of that time, however, the word basically did not have these meanings.

Let us compare Luke's use of the term with that of Paul.

In Luke's theology, the use of the word apostle is narrow, limited to twelve men. He deliberately does not use the term "apostle" even for Paul, but substitutes the term "envoy" (one who is sent); Paul was, in fact, one who was sent (of course there were exceptions, see Acts 14:14). This was a distinctive usage of the word "apostle" by St. Luke. Why did apostolic refer only to the twelve in Luke's view? We know that in the Old Testament the number "twelve" is related to the twelve patriarchs and the twelve tribes of Israel. Although there is not a strong and intimate relationship between Old and New Testament usage, still, Jesus chose twelve disciples as the foundation of God's new chosen people - the apostles. His main purpose was symbolic: "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt. 19:28). Thus, after the suicide of Judas, since the apostolic post could not be left vacant, the selection of Matthias was quickly accomplished to bring the number of apostles up to "twelve." The apostolic body formed by the twelve assumed the special function in the early church of bridging the past and the future, the key being their link with the time of Jesus. So in the beginning, when the idea of preaching to the gentiles was not yet well developed (Acts 1:8), it was Stephen who actively preached to them, even though he was not one of the twelve. Only when matters of policy arose which required a decision by the twelve, did they declare their position and take up a leadership role. The clearest example of this is the day of Pentecost, when the twelve apostles and the 120 believers prayed together, with the believers gathering round the twelve (Acts 2). The heart of the early Christian church was this group of twelve men - this is the theological thinking of St. Luke. But when we come to Paul the apostolic body is not limited to the twelve; Paul, Barnabas and others (Rom. 17:7, 2 Cor. 8:23) are also called "apostles" - this is an extended usage, not just to indicate the twelve chosen by Jesus. So, in Paul's theology, "twelve apostles" is a specialized term, indicating those who could personally testify to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22): he first appeared to Peter, then to the twelve (2Cor. 15:5), thus determining the status of the apostles as those who had witnessed Christ's resurrection. Of course Paul continues to say later, "five hundred brethren" (2Cor. 15:6) witnessed an appearance of Jesus. Yet they cannot, simply because of this, be called apostles. So it is necessary to further restrict the term "apostle." Most basic and most important is to be sent, to receive an apostolic mission. From Paul's theology we can draw the following conclusion : first, an apostle is one who has witnessed the resurrection of Jesus; secondly it means one who has received from Jesus a mission to preach his gospel. Since Paul possessed this condition and mission, he is worthy of the title "apostle."

In fact it is recorded in the gospels that during the life of Jesus, twelve apostles had been sent in small groups by the master on missions to proclaim the gospel of repentance throughout Jewish territory (Mark 6:7-13, Luke 10:1). As Jesus was about to be taken up to heaven, they also received the Lord's commission to go into all the world. After Pentecost, especially, they witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus with great vigor. In their first sermons, Peter and the other eleven apostles said very clearly that they were indeed witnesses to the

resurrection of Christ and that they were messengers who carried on the work of Jesus, preaching salvation (Acts 2:14-36).

The broadest meaning of the term apostolicity (of the church), then, is: to be directly joined to the apostles of Christ. But did the apostolic spirit of Christ end with the death of the last apostle? If this were true, then how could the apostolic church survive for nearly 2,000 years, and will it, as Jesus said, continue to the end of the world? This involves the question of apostolic succession. This is a very important and sensitive question, but one which we cannot avoid.

Imagine this: If the foundation of a building is replaced, won't the building collapse? According to Paul's view, "As it is, there are many parts, yet one body" (1Cor. 12:20). The apostles were certainly the foundation of the church, the pioneers of our church, the everlasting foundation stones, while Jesus himself is the cornerstone and center. St. Paul spoke very clearly on this: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). To summarize, the status of apostolicity is unique, and it cannot come again. No one can supersede the apostles of Christ, because the crux of the matter is, to be an apostle means to have actually seen our Lord Jesus Christ, and to know at some level that he was a man who died and was brought back to life. To put it another way, the first group of witnesses and messengers died, but the apostolic mission was not brought to an end; the mission remains. The first generation "apostolic witness" must be passed on to each generation; proclaimed from age to age. Later generations of the church have only the message and witness of the earliest apostles as a "blueprint." From this it can be said that the apostolic mission is more important than the apostles themselves.

Since the mission has not died out, the role still exists. This inherited mission will continue to the final days of the world: "When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples" (Mt. 26:20). As we said above, the apostles preserved the cause of Jesus. In order to ensure that the salvific event of Christ would be continuously preserved and developed through every period of history, "persons" must be sent forth on mission as inheritors of the apostolic cause. Who then should take up this mission?

The theologian Hans Kung believes that the entire church is the successor to the apostles. Because the church was formed when it was called together by the apostles, the church in its obedience to this call becomes successor to the apostles. No matter what, we cannot deny that the church is descended from the apostles - and not just a small number of people, but the entire church. Because the whole church is the children of God assembled through the apostles' preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the whole church is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit built on the foundation of the apostles, and through their labors the whole church has been formed into the body of Christ. So the norm for dealing with the question of the apostolic succession must be the foundation established by the apostles themselves.

For a long time in the past, discussion of questions of apostolic succession would invariably turn to questions of holy orders and primacy. Such discussions concentrated only on the validity of orders or the nature of primacy, ignoring the apostolic spirit of the gospel. No wonder criticisms have been raised: Of what use is it to pay attention only to the external

ceremony of the laying on of hands and not emphasize the spirit of the gospel? In the church today more emphasis is being placed on the apostolic spirit of the gospel, even more on the apostolic mission of evangelization, on a church which bears witness to Christ by proclaiming salvation to the world, on community building and on the preservation of the apostolic tradition of the Christian church. Today's church is attempting to find a balance to the earlier emphasis on the externals of apostolic discipline, organization, administration and structures. It is trying to a certain extent to recapture the internal spirit of the early church. Thus it is undertaking a further examination of the apostolic spirit of the gospel and the church's apostolic functions.

Since the topics included under apostolicity are many, we cannot, in fact we have no way, to deal with each of them in turn here.

Conclusion

We have used a theological methodology in our discussion, giving no more than an introduction to the church's traditions with reference to viewpoints within the church both past and present concerning the marks of the church. We should point out that these four marks are not sufficient to explain the entire truth of the church; they are only the four marks considered essential for the church of New Testament times. We should do further research into these doctrines, consulting Catholic theological expositions from the world over, so that we can independently discuss and reflect on them ourselves.

*From A Compendium of Catholic Research Materials, No. 5, (Shanghai, 1987), p.34.
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Translated by Donald MacInnis, with special thanks to Peter Barry, M. M.*

13. The Church in China: Past and Present – Aloysius Jin Luxian

Six years from now we shall be celebrating the 400th anniversary of the birth of the well-known astronomer and missionary Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666). This Jesuit priest, who was born in Cologne and died in Beijing, dedicated his entire life to the evangelization of China and the cultural exchange between East and West. I am very pleased to be able to address you today in his homeland, and to bring with me greetings from the people of China and its Catholics to the people of Germany and the German church.

Four hundred years ago when the Chinese cast their eyes for the first time on Europeans then arriving in China with their red hair, blue eyes and large noses, they were startled and amazed. The Germans of that time, in their turn, were astonished to discover the Chinese - a people of strikingly different appearance, with new and strange habits and customs, living in such a vast uncharted land. At the time, China was for them a remote and distant place. Did you know that when Adam Schall sent a letter home, he would have to wait three years before receiving an answer? The only means of transport then were sailing ships, which had to circumvent the entire coast of Africa to reach their destination. Chinese culture to those Germans seemed on the one hand to be immensely fascinating, yet on the other hand alien and mysterious. The habits and customs of these two peoples were so diverse that they often looked upon each other as inhabitants of different planets.

Thanks to modern advances in science and technology, our world has become much smaller. It is now only a twelve to fifteen hour plane trip from Cologne to Beijing. Or should one choose, one can sit in one's own home, pick up the telephone and dial a friend on the other side of the world in Shanghai. But the question remains: Do our two peoples really know and understand each other? Has modern technological progress really brought us closer together?

We now live in the space age. We look at photographs taken on the moon and study pictures from as far away as Mars. Yet despite this, communication between individuals and peoples on our own planet is often sadly lacking: our information is often faulty and this gives rise to prejudices, and there are many gaps in our knowledge. This is also true with regard to the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China. News is often disseminated that does not correspond to the truth; information is exaggerated or slanted with little regard for the actual facts. Sometimes false reports are spread abroad even about myself personally and my work. One of the reasons I have come here today to address you is to help us to overcome such misunderstandings. We must learn to speak with one another in sincerity and truth.

While there may be sinister reports about us, there are also many appreciative ones as well. Many German people come with open minds to visit China, to observe and listen without prejudice, in order to gain a more objective understanding of us.

I have been able to make this trip because of the kind invitation of my German friends. I am very pleased and grateful to them for their invitation. I wish also to express my thanks to

those of you who invited me here to give this lecture. It is my sincere desire that by this mutual exchange of experiences we shall be promoting the cause of friendship between ourselves and our peoples. I hope and pray that what we say and do here this evening will have the blessing of Almighty God.

Among the topics suggested for this evening's lecture, the choice narrowed itself down to two: "World Church and Local Church from China's Perspective" and "Christian Faith in the Far East: A Chinese View." Both subjects are quite vast, and I am acutely aware at this time of my own limited knowledge in trying to address them. I am sure that there are many among you who know a lot more than I do about both topics. So what I would really like to speak about to you is primarily my own personal experience with regard to the presence of the Christian faith in China, both yesterday and today.

A History of the Catholic Church in China

First, let me take you on a short excursion into its history.

During the Tang Dynasty, at the beginning of the 7th century, before St. Boniface had arrived to begin his work in Germany and during the renaissance of the Chinese Empire, Christianity had already come to China. It came with Nestorian Christians who traveled to our country over the Silk Road. There they built churches and found among the Chinese many followers. This initial period of Christian missionary activity lasted for about 200 years. It came to an end when all foreign religions were suppressed by Imperial edict, and the Nestorians disappeared from China forever.

At the beginning of the 13th century, Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, established the Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368) in China, making Beijing his capital. These Mongol rulers followed an open-door policy and were quite tolerant in their attitude towards all religions. As a result, Franciscan missionaries from Europe were allowed to enter China. They too traveled along the Silk Road, building churches and founding Christian communities. In the year 1298 the Italian Franciscan Giovanni de Montecorvino (1247-1328) and the German Franciscan Arnold of Cologne established the bishopric of Beijing. They found in China many followers, especially from among the nobility. The Catholic Church spread; there were churches in Yangzhou (Jiangsu province), Quanzhou (Fujian province) and in many other places. Christians were even given certain special privileges. But the Franciscan success was to be found mainly among the Mongols and less among the real Chinese, the Han people, who did not come to a knowledge of the gospel during this period, with the result that when the Yuan was overthrown in 1368 by the Ming, a Chinese dynasty that was to last until 1644, Christianity in China was destroyed for the second time.

It was only towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, when Matteo Ricci and Michael Ruggieri were able to settle in Shaoqing in the southern province of Guangdong that the fortunes of Christianity in China again changed.

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) is well known to you. The 400th anniversary of his arrival in China was celebrated four years ago both in the East and West. Much was written and many

symposia were held in his honor throughout the world at that time. Ricci has been praised as a model for all missionaries, for in his own day he had already grasped the vital importance of accommodation and inculturation in evangelization. It was just such a policy that Ricci himself practiced throughout his whole life. The question arises: How can we best imitate him in today's circumstances?

It was the ardent desire of the Apostle of Asia, St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552), to open the gates of China to Christianity. He died on a small island overlooking the southern coast of the China mainland, abandoned and alone on this wind and rain-swept doorstep just short of his goal. How mysterious are the ways of God. The year of Xavier's death saw the birth of Matteo Ricci, the man who would put into effect his dying wish. After completing his studies in Rome, where he pursued courses not only in philosophy and theology but also astronomy, Ricci went to Lisbon where, after obtaining the necessary permission from the Portuguese government to do missionary work, he set sail for Macau. After some years of preparation there, he was eventually able to proceed into the interior of China.

The missionaries of those days were faced with a non-Christian culture that dated back four thousand years, a culture notable for its high standards of morality. While there were Europeans who looked down from haughty heights at this culture, this was not to be said of Matteo Ricci. Immediately upon arrival, he threw himself with passion and love into the task of mastering the language, immersing himself in Chinese literature and a study of Chinese habits and customs. He followed the path of accommodation and inculturation, and after much reflection and experimentation, he came up with a method of evangelization that was both practical and realistic. In time, he was accepted not only by the broad strata of Chinese people, but also by the elite of Chinese society.

Ricci observed two characteristics of the Chinese people that were very special: first, the deep respect they had for the famous philosopher Kongzi (known to the West as Confucius), and second, the extraordinary, almost child-like, love and esteem they had for parents and ancestors - the progenitors of the family. No festive occasion was celebrated without rituals in honor of their ancestors; for example, the placing of food offerings before their pictures or memorial tablets. Ricci accommodated completely to the Confucian culture; he dressed in the garb of a Chinese scholar, and in his preaching and writing, he often quoted from the Chinese classics, clothing his message, as it were, in Chinese dress. He wrote: "In this way the Gospel becomes more easily understandable to the Chinese."

In this way Ricci was able to win the deep respect and friendship of many Chinese scholars, and through his friendship, many came to understand and accept the Christian faith. Among these scholars, there were many high officials of the court, notably Li Zhizao (c. 1630), and Xu Guangxi (1562-1633) who later became the prime minister. By means of these relationships, Ricci was able to penetrate to the interior of the Imperial Court and he received an audience with the Emperor himself. Ricci was also the means by which the latest developments of Western science were introduced into China. Many Chinese came to respect his breadth of learning and his deep knowledge of Chinese culture. It was through this kind of inculturation that Christianity could remain in China, sink roots and develop there.

Statistics of those times demonstrate the correctness of Ricci's approach. In the year 1584, there were only 3 Christians in China; in 1585 only 19, which increased to 80 by 1589; by 1603 there were 500 and in 1610 over 2,500; this number rose to 38,000 in 1636, to 48,180 by 1648, and by the year 1670 there were already 273,780 Chinese Catholics. But such progress did not last long; for the devil had already sown seeds of discord in the vineyard of the Lord.

The Dominicans and Jesuits of that time were strong adversaries, holding conflicting opinions on a wide range of important issues. Their disputes, centered in Europe and especially in Rome, spilled over into China. Added to this was the political rivalry between Portugal and other emerging colonial powers. Portugal was the first European colonial power to arrive in the East, and it laid claim to India and all the lands adjacent to the Indian Ocean. It had obtained from the Pope *Padroado* rights over the missions in those territories. And a Papal Bull issued by Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) openly encouraged Portuguese colonial expansion to include all nations east of India. Colonial powers arriving later in East Asia, especially France, would engage in keen competition with Portugal for Protectorate rights over the missions there. It was the policy of the European powers to use religion and the missionaries to further their colonial policies.

We come now to the Rites Controversy, which we touched on briefly above. The veneration of Confucius and ancestors, which was common practice throughout China, was considered by the Jesuits to be merely civil ceremony in nature, and therefore open to Christian participation. But the Dominicans and others, most notably the French missionaries, saw ancestor worship as a superstitious practice and thus forbidden to all Christians. Not only did these people reject Chinese culture in principle, but they even changed the surnames of their converts from Chinese names to Western names. What were they really after? The colonialists and those that helped them saw only to their own selfish interests, and the well-being of the Church meant little or nothing to them.

The Kangxi Emperor (1655-1723) was a wise and open-minded man. He was also friendly towards Christianity, holding in high respect the virtue and learning of such early missionaries as Adam Schall and Verbiest. He admired the teaching found in the Gospel, especially as it related to Christian love. When the squabbling and controversies among the missionaries were brought to his attention, his favorable impressions gave way to disillusionment. He began to think that behind the external facade of virtue, there was much that smacked of egotistical intrigue and greed for power. Out of sympathy for the Jesuits, he wished to put an end to the controversy over the rites, and so he publicly declared the veneration of Confucius and the worship of ancestors to be ceremonies of a civil nature. Despite this statement by the Emperor, the Dominicans and their followers not only did not abandon their attacks, but even stepped up their efforts to add further fuel to the controversy.

It was Pope Clement XI (1700-1721) who sent the Titular Patriarch of Antioch, Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon (1668-1710) as Apostolic Delegate to China to promulgate the papa prohibition of the Chinese rites and to see that it was put into effect. He summoned to Beijing one of the greatest opponents of this form of inculturation, the Vicar Apostolic of Fu'an, Charles Maigrot, M EP (1652-1730), and together they were received by the Emperor.

When the Emperor pointed to the four large Chinese characters that hung behind the Imperial throne and asked Maigrot through an interpreter if he understood their meaning, Maigrot answered that he did not. Whereupon the Emperor said to him: "You cannot speak a word of Chinese nor recognize it when it is written. How then are you able to make judgments about Chinese matters? You are like one who stands outside a room commenting on what is going on inside the closed doors. Your talk has no foundation. Leave China!" Tournon was forced to return to Macau, only to have the Portuguese government there imprison him for attempting to appoint a Chinese archbishop without the King of Portugal's approval.

After the death of Tournon, Pope Clement XI sent another papal legate to China. Carlo A. de Mezzabarba came armed with the Papal Bull *Ex Illa Die* to enforce the prohibition. He too was received by the Emperor in accordance with Chinese courtesy. When in the course of the audience the Emperor asked him whether or not there were men in Europe with wings as those he had seen portrayed in Western religious art, Mezzabarba replied: "No, there are no men with wings. The painters merely wanted to symbolize in this way the swiftness of angels." The Emperor retorted: "I understand. Because we Chinese are not familiar with your language, we do not understand your affairs. But you as a Westerner do not speak our Chinese language, so how are you able to make decisions about Chinese affairs? That is what I meant to convey by my question."

Despite repeated statements by the Emperor, the Pope remained adamant, forbidding Chinese Catholics from practicing ancestor worship under threat of excommunication. When the Emperor learned that missionaries were continuing to implement the Papal ruling, he had them expelled from China.

One can easily imagine the difficult situation the Chinese Catholics found themselves in at that time. A Catholic who followed the prohibition in order to remain a Christian could no longer consider himself to be Chinese, for every Chinese without exception practiced veneration of Confucius and ancestor worship. Catholic children had to renounce Chinese education, since the heart of traditional teaching was Confucian doctrine. Chinese Catholics now became outcasts in their own society, pariahs among their own people.

What resulted from this crude form of papal interference was the decline of Christianity in China. The number of Chinese Catholics, which had climbed to over 300,000, quickly dropped under 200,000 after the prohibition. Those who remained Catholics were mostly farmers and fishermen, who had to live isolated from, and were despised by the rest of Chinese society.

After two hundred years, Rome finally reversed its decision and lifted the prohibition. Today Chinese are encouraged to venerate Confucius and their ancestors. In many churches in Taiwan, the picture of Confucius is placed side-by-side with that of St. Thomas. On All Souls Day, Christians go to the cemeteries to place before the graves of deceased relatives their favorite foods. These changes are certainly to the good; it is surely better to admit one's mistake than to persist in error. But have they not come too late? At a time when the veneration of Confucius was vitally necessary to the Chinese, Rome forbade it, and now at a time when the Chinese have become quite indifferent to him, Rome allows it. The damage

caused by the Rites Controversy can hardly be undone. It is good when a man recognizes his mistake; if he reflects on the causes, there will be less chance that he will repeat that mistake in the future. In my opinion, an important reason why Church officials blundered in handling the rites question lay in the unholy alliance between the Church and the colonial powers. They had forgotten the teaching of Christ on love and equal rights for all men; they wanted to Christianize other countries while they colonized them.

The gates of China were reopened to the Christian missionaries in 1842 by the so-called "Unequal Treaties," which ended the First Opium War and which the victorious British forced the Emperor to sign. In the provisions of the treaty, one could read side-by-side: "From now on foreign merchants are permitted to sell opium in the whole of China ... and missionaries shall be allowed to spread their gospel throughout the empire." That supposedly Christian believers would actually use violence to force opium on citizens of other countries is really a disgrace for Christianity. Freedom to preach the gospel that goes hand-in-hand with Christianity was used by the European powers solely to extend their political influence. And the Roman Curia allied itself with these powers, apportioning to them the Chinese Church.

With the decline of Portugal, France assumed the so-called Protectorate over the Catholic missions in China. Franciscan missionaries were to receive the lion's share of the territories : Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hebei, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Yunna and Zhejiang. Belgian missionaries were given Mongolia, the Germans got Shandong province. The missionaries bought properties, built churches, established schools and hospitals. Most of the missionaries were good people, who consecrated their whole lives to the Church of China. But, also, some were not! To quote one example, the Rector of the Catholic Aurora University in Shanghai was fond of saying: "L'Aurore, c'est la France!"

In the eyes of many Chinese, the missionaries represented narrow national interests. Christianity was, therefore, a western religion for the West and not for China. Furthermore, missionaries were accorded many special privileges, which allowed some of their Christians to bring unfair lawsuits, with the help of the missionaries, against their neighbors. This was the source of much of the discontent, resentment and anger that was directed towards the missionaries. In the year 1900, it led to the Boxer Rebellion. The battle-cry of the Boxers was: "Up with the Qing dynasty, and down with its enemies (including those half-foreign devils the Christians)." Eight foreign powers, including Germany, joined forces and sent troops to China to put down this rebellion. After the siege of the legations was lifted in Beijing, China was condemned, and the allied powers imposed an indemnity of 400,000,000 Chinese dollars (a dollar at the time was half the monthly wage of an ordinary laborer). The foreign troops were eventually withdrawn, but the anger of the Chinese against the foreigners and the Christian religion only grew stronger.

Further mistakes that were to prove disastrous for Chinese Catholics were made by the Vatican at the time of the Japanese aggression. The Vatican had hurried to recognize the Japanese puppet-state of Manzhuguo in Manchuria. The Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Zanin also wrote a letter to all the bishops, priests and Catholics in China, cautioning them to remain neutral in the face of actual Japanese aggression. Understandably, this position deeply

offended Chinese patriots. Since Japan and Italy were forming an axis with the Fascist government of Germany, what were the Chinese to think of the Vatican, which was in Italy, and the Catholic Church at large?

From the time of Matteo Ricci throughout 350 years of the church in China, there had been only one Chinese bishop. All the bishops were foreigners, when in 1926 the first Chinese bishops were ordained. Naturally, they were given only the unimportant dioceses. In the 1930's, however, the attitude of the Vatican did change, and right after World War II, in 1946, an independent Chinese hierarchy was set up, with Beijing finally getting its first Chinese archbishop and cardinal. Unfortunately, it was already too late. In 1949, Mao Zedong took power in China. We should not overlook the fact that this power change also meant the end of all colonial and imperial claims by the European powers, and the recovery by China of full independence as well as her national self-respect.

In this very difficult and delicate situation, Chinese Catholics were subjected to another series of misfortunes. The Roman Curia forbade Chinese Catholics from cooperating with the Communist regime, which was now ruling China and was accepted by its people. Catholics were forbidden to read newspapers, periodicals and books published by the Communists. They were also prohibited from joining trade unions or any other associations that were Communist-organized. And while the Chinese were fighting American troops in the Korean conflict, the Vatican appointed an American as Bishop of Yangzhou (Jiangsu province). Can you imagine what would have happened if during the First World War the Vatican had appointed a Frenchman to be Archbishop of Cologne and a German as Archbishop of Lille?

Thus once again the Chinese Catholics found themselves on the horns of the old dilemma: to remain Catholic, they could not remain Chinese. After the foreign missionaries had left or been expelled from China, the Vatican did not wish to appoint any new bishops. The Chinese Catholics themselves then proceeded to choose and ordain them. The names of those chosen were sent to the Roman Curia, but the answer that came back was a threat of excommunication.

From this brief history of the Church in China, we can learn three things:

1. The Church must put down roots in every people and culture; the faith must be brought to the masses; the Church must share the fate of the people.
2. Inculturation must be the primary principle on which all pastoral activity is based.
3. The Church must be independent of colonial powers and must be able to exercise regional self-administration.

Each local church should be allowed to determine its own fate. The Church of China has had its own personal experiences. At the same time, it knows very well that the Roman Curia has a worldwide strategy and it must attempt to balance the interests of many different peoples and powers, which is not always a simple task. We Chinese Catholics are Catholics who want to remain Catholics; we have no wish to become Protestants or Orthodox

Christians. We basically accept the First and Second Vatican Councils, and we are trying now to implement the Second Vatican Council directives in China. With the help of God, we ourselves are able to administer and develop our Church in our own region. We possess the courage, the wisdom, and, I pray, the charisma to do so.

Today we have reopened more than 600 churches, including the Cathedrals of Beijing and Shanghai. The great pilgrimage-church of Sheshan near Shanghai has also been reopened. We now have six regional seminaries and one national seminary preparing young men for the priesthood. In my own diocese, we have established a research institute for the publication of books and periodicals, and have recently established an association of Catholic academicians. We look with confidence to the future.

World Church and Local Church: A Chinese Perspective

Now I would like to say a few words about a second topic: the relationship between the World Church and the local church from a Chinese point of view.

What actually is a local church and what is the World Church? Only after clarifying the meaning of these words is one able to continue the discussion. The local church is a concept of some elasticity and flexibility. Each Christian community basically can be called a local church. A diocese is a local church in the fuller sense of the word; a regional, a national, a continental church is likewise a local church. Cologne is a local church as is Shanghai. The diocese of Rome is likewise a local church, as is the Italian church, the Asian church, the European church, the Slav church, etc.

The World Church, or Universal Church, is rather an abstraction since as such it exists nowhere; it exists only in the local churches. Perhaps instead of "Universal Church" it would be better for us to say "complete Church" (*Vollständige Kirche*) or total Church (*Gesamtkirche*). The total Church as a whole exists in each local church, each local church thus being a complete Church. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 2:5-6).

The Church is a Sacrament, i.e., sign and instrument, for the most intimate union with God as well as for the unity of the whole of mankind. This means that behind its external aspect it contains in itself' mysteries: the mysterious activity of God. Among others we can find at least two:

In the "Lauda Sion", the Eucharistic hymn of St. Thomas Aquinas we pray:

"By His Sacred precepts guides,
Make we bread and wine provided,
A saving victim from above
"When the host in pieces breakest
If thou waver, thou mistakest,
For each fragment thou partakest
Holds no less than does the whole.
Of the substance no division,
Signs alone admit partition,
Whence unlesened the condition
Of the symbolled body and soul."

*Docti Sacris institutis Panent,
vinum in slautiss Consecrainus
hostiam
Fracto denum sacrnato Ne
vacilles, .sed mementoi Tantum
esse sub fragmento Quantum toto
tegitur.
Nulla lei fit scissura; Signi
tantum fit fractura: Qua nec
status nec Jautura Signati
minuitur.*

In the Preface for the Trinity we sing:

"O holy Lord, Father almighty,
ever-lasting God; Who with
Thine only-begotten Son and
the Holy Spirit are one God,
one Lord; not in the oneness
of a single person, but in
the Trinity of one substance.
For that which we believe
from Thy revelation concern-
ing Thy glory, that same we
believe of Thy Son, that same
of the Holy Spirit, without
difference or separation. So
that in confessing the true
and ever-lasting God-head, we
shall adore distinction in persons,
oneness in being,

and equality in majesty."
*Domine sancte, Pater olnni-
potens, aeterne Deus. Qui
cum unigenito Filio tuo, et
Spiritu Sancto, unus es Deus,
unus es Dominus: Non in
nius Trinitate substantiae.
Quod enim de tua gloria,
reueante te, credimus, hoc
de Filio tuo, hoc de Spiritu
Sancto, sine differentia
discretionis sentimus. Ut in
confessione verae sempiternae
Deitatis, et in pensonis
proprietas, et in essentia
unitas, et in majestate
adoretur aequalitas.*

How beautiful this Preface is!

Should the relationship between the total Church and the local church not be the same? Differentiation, unity and equality of the churches on earth reflect the mystery of the Trinity in Heaven.

That is why in the relationship between the local churches we must take note that we see the most important thing is mutual love, communion, koinonia, community - and not power and law. Proceeding from love, the missionaries set out to preach the Gospel. After the founding of a local Church, they should retire into the background, not hold onto leadership positions for hundreds of years. They should make their own the saying of John the Baptist: "He must increase, I must decrease."

Our Church is God's new people; she is founded by Christ to bring salvation to all men. She is, therefore, open to all peoples, to all nations. She is a pilgrim en route to the heavenly Jerusalem. When she proclaims the Gospel in a new country, she should not tie herself to that one culture.

The Church springs from Judaism, from the Orient, that is why she had in the beginning many Oriental characteristics. She developed in the West; Hellenism, Latinism, the Gospel and Judaism are all elements in Western Christianity. Hellenism and Latinism were united so closely that today one can hardly distinguish between them any more.

The church of the early centuries was an outstanding example of inculturation. Later the elements of Latinism dominated. The emphasis was put on law and power. Naturally a certain institutionalization of the church is necessary, but it must not eliminate communion, mutual fraternity and love on equal terms. Today we are confronted with the task of inculturating and incorporating the church into new cultures. Each unifying with other cultures makes the church richer and more beautiful. It is a sign of the vitality of our church, whereas monotony and "single-coloredness" indicate only stagnation and weakness.

Christianity is not destroyed by multiplicity but rather completed and perfected by it; the colorful cultures of all the nations are part of her richness. Christianity does not mean Latin or European culture. The church up to today is in a growth process moving towards her completion; she needs many nutrients, i.e., other cultures, including the Indian and the Chinese. Culturation, acculturation, interculturalization and transculturalization: that is how the process of Christianization happens. A procession of different people in a variety of colorful dresses is more beautiful and more interesting than a single line of long, black soutanes.

Recently I read a book by Cardinal Albert Decourtray, the Archbishop of Lyons. I found it very inspiring. May I quote a few words from it?

Many people think that the faith should be pure and ideal, that one should express it in unchanging concepts for many thousands of years. But in reality the Christian faith can develop only by incorporation with the local culture. God's Word, including the Holy Scriptures, is expressed in human speech, with the character therefore of a national culture.

The faith of the Logos, God's Son, can experiment, live, express itself in diverse cultures in different civilizations, without anything being changed in the substance. We can even go further in saying: it is precisely in plurality and in different times and places that God's Word develops its infinite power. In no way should we tie God's Hands.

Since God's Word has entered the history of men, goodness and beauty unfold without limit in this world. Christ said to his disciples: "You will do greater things than I" - in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why the church is not helpless or terrified to death when confronted with new cultures, new political circumstances, new challenges. Her attitude then is not negative but

sympathetic. Precisely because she possesses the truth, the light and eternal life, she is full of confidence and optimism.

The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. She grows in time and space to that dimension which was predetermined for her by God. The quintessence of the cultures of all countries comes from God and is foreseen by God as a constitutive part of the Body of Christ. Every refusal causes an irreplaceable loss. St. Paul says: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor. 12:12-26).

The relationship between the local churches must therefore be: koinonia, communion, mutual love, respect, help. There should be no crude interference; no local church should seek to oppress other Churches.

In my opinion princes of the Church who live in palaces cannot understand the pain and misery of those who live in the slums, who have little to eat and little to wear. Would that all priests and nuns, would that all Christians who see this misery, might help them. Therefore, let there be no more interference!

We have in China only three million Catholics, a very small minority. But we can again do pastoral work; we struggle; and we find success. We would like to have communion with all Catholics who are brothers and friends to us that we might share together our suffering and joy.

I am no historian and I am no theologian. I have only shared with you some of my experiences. I thank you from my heart.

Address given by Bishop Jin to a group of German Catholics while visiting West Germany in April, 1987.

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SERMONS

14. A Reconciling Faith – K.H. Ting

Text: Eph. 2: 13-17

What makes the Christian gospel a gospel and, indeed, *the* gospel? It is not its recognition of the existence of God, nor its affirmation of the next world, nor its pointing out that the human person has a soul and can enjoy eternal life. The reason the Christian gospel is gospel lies in its proclamation that this God is love, that he conquers sin and eliminates its power, that he reconciles humanity to himself and human persons to each other. To this end this God became human, and accomplished the salvation of humanity through the cross, opening thereby the door to reconciliation. The Risen, Ascended Christ is the Lord of creation. He upholds the universe with his word of power. 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. Through Christ, humanity is reconciled to God and witnesses to reconciliation in the world. This is the good news. And it is in this that the Christian gospel differs from all other religions. When this gospel takes the cross for its standard, a shameful emblem becomes a glorious one. This gospel requires that people recognize and confess their sins before the cross. Because of this, in the past two thousand years, even in so-called Christian countries, people have not genuinely welcomed this gospel. They have resisted or diluted it, removed from it what they did not want to hear and have cheapened it; degrading the gospel into something which does not require that men and women make a complete break with sin. In so doing, they are preaching another Christ. This we should not do. Three-Self wants only to change a Western Christianity into a Chinese Christianity, so that Chinese people may more readily accept this Christ. It certainly has no intention of preaching a different Christ.

When we preach the gospel, we must not exaggerate unfavorable conditions, nor miss the favorable ones.

For example, is the propagation of atheism necessarily an unfavorable factor? Some friends overseas seem to assume that there is unremitting propagation of atheism in China and that the whole atmosphere in our country is thus filled with atheistic particles. But this is not so. There is some propagation of atheism, yes, but mostly not powerful. Besides, we need to realize that whatever propagation of atheism there is does us the service of putting the question of God into people's minds. Isn't this a first step towards faith in God? There are in fact some who have come to Christian faith because they were disappointed by the atheism presented to them. We know it is never so easy to prove the nonexistence of something.

We need to see the favorable conditions around us. From a narrow point of view, we do face many problems, but taking a larger view, the conditions for the work of the gospel are very good. China has experienced several thousand years of class antagonism. Today we have already entered an historical stage in which class antagonism is no longer the primary contradiction. We have gone from a historical period of emphasizing class struggle into one of emphasizing stability and unity. Many other countries have not yet done this. Perhaps

because of these several thousand years of antagonism and struggle, those of us who belong to the last two or two or three generations cannot quickly accustom ourselves to this brand new historical situation. However, this is a profoundly significant turning point in human history. In terms of the church, this turning point implies the arrival of extremely favorable conditions for its witness. In the years of antagonism and struggle, the gospel of Christian reconciliation seemed to be so greatly at loggerheads with the prevailing atmosphere - it was like a square peg in a round hole. Struggle precluded reconciliation. Now the emphasis is on stability and unity and a reconciling faith falls more easily on the ear. Stability and unity are vital to national construction and favorable as well for the servants of Christ's gospel of reconciliation.

During the historical period of national and class struggle, there were those who hoped for reconciliation, "The trees long for calm but the wind will not subside," as we say. But class struggle was an objective reality. Reconciliation was not up to the individual. The more politically conscious a person was, the less could he or she accept a reconciling faith.

The German poet, playwright and critic Bertolt Brecht's poem "To Posterity" tells us that, during the time when class struggle is a necessity, reconciliation can be but a splendid aspiration, difficult even for those who want to achieve it. He entreats those of us "who come after" to make allowances for the revolutionaries in the midst of our stability and prosperity. Let me quote it to you:

You, who shall emerge from the flood
In which we are sinking,
Think -
When you speak of our weaknesses,
Also of the dark times
That brought them forth.

For we went, changing our country more often than our shoes.
In the class war, despairing
When there was only injustice and no resistance.
For we know only too well:
Even the hatred of squalor
makes the brow grow stern.
Even anger against injustice
Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas we
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness
Could not ourselves be kind.

But you, when at last it comes to pass
That man can help his fellow man,
Do not judge us

Too harshly. *

This poem illustrates that, in a world of class struggle, struggle is ceaseless, reconciliation can only be a goal and a hope and any attempt to make it a reality can only seem like a selling out of the revolution, surrendering to the enemy.

Over the past several thousand years, Chinese history has been one of struggle. Even counting from the years of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the struggle between oppression and liberation has been going on for over one hundred years. During the Cultural Revolution period the philosophy of struggle reached its peak: There was no reconciliation between persons and mutual harm and hatred seemed to have gained the upper hand.

Today, in order to unite the whole people for the construction of the motherland, we must turn the links between persons to those of friendship and unity. How we need the curative powers of love! We must establish between people close and loving relationships, understanding relationships, considerate relationships, tolerant and forgiving relationships. We must eliminate the tendencies to be suspicious; to nurse a grudge; to impute crimes to others; to escalate criticism to unreasonable heights, making devils out of some people. As for all sayings like "life-and-death-struggle," "off with your wicked head," "we'll tread on you so hard you won't rise again," etc., we must see that people speak them no more, and that whoever says such things will be considered vulgar and uncouth. Doesn't our gospel of love and reconciliation have a great deal to contribute in achieving these goals? Under the present need for and policy of seeking stability and unity, people won't find the mention of reconciliation out of place, but will feel that it will expedite stability and unity, and they will listen.

Today, before God, what all people on earth and all Chinese people need most is the gospel through which Christ reconciles us to God. How lacking we are in humaneness and how in need of it we are today. People need to be humane towards each other. The reconciling gospel of Christ is an important source of humanitarianism

In recent years, the number of Christians has increased, not decreased. Admittedly there are many reasons for this and, without doubt, the self-government, self-support and self-propagation of the Chinese church is one important reason, but another important reason is that people are disposed towards reconciliation. Christ's gospel of reconciliation is able to strike a much more sympathetic chord than the philosophy of struggle: it seems to tug at people's very heart strings. They have seen too much that is inhumane and they are ready to see more that is humane. Much of the struggle in the past was necessary. But today the people are more willing to seek unity and human warmth. They are more willing to believe than in the past that this universe is not so cold and heartless; that it would not tolerate human indignity or deprivation of rights. They want to believe that it is a home of love and they would like to return to this home. In the book of Isaiah we have, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (Is.30: 15). The Lord

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Jesus said, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt.11:28). When people hear these words today, they sound very moving. "Return," "rest," "trust," "quiet," "come": these are exactly what many people are thirsting for, what they long to hear. Why do they want to hear "return?" Because although people now have a place to live and are no longer wandering around lost, but feel secure, some people still have a feeling of spiritual rootlessness deep within their hearts; a sense of homelessness, a longing for a spiritual home.

If the poem "Idyll on Returning to the Countryside," by the fifth century poet Tao Yuanming, speaks about returning to one's native place in the line "The garden is overgrown with weeds, why not go back to tend it?" then some people today have a sense of spiritual lostness, they do not know where they have a "home" to go to. They want to find a place, a place where they can love and be loved. Goethe said, "It is blessed to be loved, but it is even more blessed to love." If the church can incarnate this love, if it can become a place where those who love and those who are loved can gather, then people will be willing to come to the church. But if we merely speak cleverly of this love, but do not incarnate it, people will see through us and leave again.

Some people think that religious persons believe in God because they have first come to a philosophical acceptance of theism and, therefore, these same people think that the propagation of atheism can cause religious persons to abandon their faith. They are mistaken. Those who have become Christians through ontological study are very few. The reason most people come to Christ is that they are experiencing isolation and loneliness and they are longing for love. They are cold and seeking warmth; they want to find the strength to support them in their progress and to avoid falling into the abyss of evil and sin. When they have found all of this, only then are they willing to accept theism as a theory and the tenets of Christianity.

During the Cultural Revolution, many Christians were willing to be despised, to endure attack, rather than make a false witness and did not casually sign their names to posters attacking someone else. In the villages in the countryside, there is harmony in Christian homes, the relationships between daughter- and mother-in-law, and those among siblings, are very good, people work hard and do not deceive each other. This has made a deep impression on other people. Many non-believers will ask, what is this Christianity then? How can it produce people like these? Some even say they want to become Christians because Christians are so friendly. In the cities, many Christian women are involved in the work of residential committees. When there is a dispute, they go to reconcile. In some cases, divorces have been avoided because these women have gone once, twice, five, even ten times to persuade the couples to reconcile; and relationships between the young and the elderly have been smoothed over due to their efforts at persuasion. The family, the underpinning for people striving for the four modernizations, is thus on solid ground. Isn't this extremely valuable work? And that is not all. Through such work it is sometimes possible to go a step further and bring people to know the God who is willing to be reconciled with us, to return to the source and giver of reconciliation, Jesus Christ himself. Is not that even more valuable?

John Macquarrie says in *The Humility of God*: "There can be no shortcut to reconciliation that does not pass through liberation. Liberation however cannot be an ultimate Christian goal and must give way to reconciliation." What I am driving at is exactly that. It is necessary to struggle for liberation; that is not something we can dispense with. But today we have already entered a period of striving for reconciliation. Reconciliation is the continuation of liberation, its expansion and development, a way of creating conditions for a more profound liberation. The recognition that struggle is no longer the key link is politically and historically significant, but more than this, for the church it means that witness to the gospel has also entered upon a new period, the entire significance of which can only be understood in the future. What we can already see in the present is that we can expect the message of the gospel to fall on more fertile ground and to bear fruit. This is different from a society marked by class antagonism.

Precisely because of this, can we not also expect a springtime of Chinese Christian theology? A theology which would not repeat what has been said by foreign theologians, but one which would express how, in an age when class struggle is no longer dominant, Chinese Christians spread the reconciling gospel of Christ to their people; a theology which reflects how this gospel of reconciliation changes the Chinese people, and a theology which would reflect how these Chinese people then enrich the church's knowledge of this gospel. Let us make contributions to the work of developing such a theology.

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15. The Heavenly Vision – Chen Zemin

"Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

Acts 21-26 records the events following Paul's seizure by the Jews during the disturbance in the Temple in Jerusalem. Tried and imprisoned in Palestine for three years, he was finally brought before King Agrippa to plead his defense.

This section is one of the most vivid and reliable historical narratives in the Bible. It takes place about 58-60 AD, after Paul has experienced his vision on the Damascus Road which led him to believe in Christ and changed him from a zealous persecutor of Christians to a loyal and devoted witness who preached the gospel for thirty years. Ten years after this event he died a martyr in Rome. The author shows a superb talent for chronicling events: the account is detailed, accurate, suspenseful, descriptive narrative presented in five main sections of first-person self-defense and other historical material. With its complicated twists and turns and leaps in time, it makes a vivid and fascinating dramatization. If we read it straight through as a story, we have the feeling that we are actually there at the scene, witnessing with our own eyes those profoundly moving events. Therefore, it also makes an excellent resource for Biblical research. In this historical drama there are several moving scenes which build, one by one, to the climax:

1. Chapters 21-22: Paul is seized by the Jews who caused the disturbance in the Temple; he makes his defense before the Tribune and spectators.

2. Chapter 23: He stands trial before the Council, using the dispute over resurrection of the body between the Pharisees and Sadducees as a divisive tactic to extricate himself from a difficult situation.

3. Chapter 23 (second half): Forty Jews swear an oath and plot to ambush and kill Paul. Paul's nephew hears of the plot and goes to the army barracks to tell him. The tribune sends Paul to Caesarea to be handed over to the Governor, Felix. The author quotes the Tribune's letter concerning Paul here.

4. Chapter 24: The High Priest, Ananias, the elders, spokesmen and other Jews arrive in Caesarea to state their case against Paul. Paul stands trial before the Governor, Felix, and conducts his own defense. N.B.: Felix was a wily Governor. He neither charged Paul nor set him free, but procrastinated, hoping that Paul might offer him bribe. Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years and used this opportunity to preach and witness to Christ.

5. Chapter 25: Two years later Festus replaced Felix as Governor. The Jews took this opportunity to demand that Paul be sent to Jerusalem and prepared to murder him en route; however, Festus refused.

6. Paul is brought before the court in Caesarea. Festus can see that the accusations against Paul cannot be proven, yet at the same time he does not want to put the blame on the Jews.

Paul speak! in his own defense and requests to be allowed to make his case before Caesar (since he was a Roman citizen). He would use legal tactics to defeat the Jewish plot.

7. The final scene: the climax: Agrippa II and his wife Bernice visit Festus, who brings the case before the King hoping that this will please the Jews. Festus therefore called a "tribunal" composed of himself, King Agrippa and Agrippa's wife, Bernice. To a packed public court the defendant, Paul, pleads his own case (it seems there was no prosecutor).

In Chapter 26 Paul makes his defense to the tribunal. It is a remarkable and brilliant piece of testimony. He not only pleads his own case but also witnesses and preaches the Gospel. This is the climax of the whole drama, and in it there is one outstanding sentence - the climax of the climax so to speak: "Wherefore, C King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

If we want to understand the full weight of the meaning of these words, we must take the whole drama together.

What follows the scenes described above is a brilliant epilogue, also very vivid and endlessly fascinating (verses 24-39), after which we are suddenly brought up short, a device to keep the readers' attention engaged.

I seem to be contravening the principles of sermon organization in spending so much time introducing this account; perhaps trying to cover too much. This is because I am reluctant to leave out any of the circumstances of this story. In fact, my aim is to bring out more forcefully today's text:

"I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

From the time of his conversion until his martyrdom, Paul experienced many difficulties and setbacks, yet he stood firm and unswerving, resourceful and courageous, in order to proclaim the good news to the gentiles and to attack the narrow ethnocentrism of the Jewish people. Herein lies the crux of the matter, his motive: that he did not disobey "the heavenly vision."

The Bible is a vision-filled book, it is the word of God. It is both "revelation" and "inspiration." But a "vision" is more vivid, more palpable than language. For example, in Genesis, Jacob dreams of the ladder to heaven, and wrestles with the angel; and Joseph has a dream. In Exodus, Moses on Mount Horeb saw the burning bush and heard God speak. In the books of the prophets, Isaiah saw a vision in the temple and received the divine command (Isa. 6:); Ezekiel saw the four living beings and the four wheels, and also the dry bones come to life again (Ezek. 37:); "visions" are the major content of the book of Daniel; Joel Chapter Two prophesies about the last days when "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions..." Proverbs says "Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint" (29:18). In Acts 2, Peter quoted the scene at Pentecost from the Book of Joel to explain that the Holy Spirit coming down from heaven was the fulfillment of the words of the prophets,

and also that visions are from God. In Revelation, John, on the island of Patmos, saw many visions which carried in them the final promises.

The Patriarchs, prophets and apostles all received the revelation and command of God, the talents bestowed by God, and also were touched by the Holy Spirit in visions.

The church of the Apostolic age was a church which relied on visions for guidance and power. Over the past 2000 years, the Christian Church has developed a mission to the whole world. We, part of the history of the church and its mission, have also seen many visions.

The word "vision" is rendered in Hebrew as *hazon*. Sometimes it can be translated as "revelation" but more accurately, the meaning is closer to "apparition" which has a direct connection to the act of seeing, often translated in English as "vision" and in modern Chinese, is rendered very well as "distant image." This, "distant image" points to a sight which appears before our eyes or to an experience. It also refers to the future, and includes the meaning "ideal" although it is even more concrete, more palpable and vivid than ordinary ideals; its origin, moreover, is God.

According to the principles of Biblical exegesis, a text may have several levels of meaning. If we use the analogy of the threefold nature of man, that is, body, mind and spirit, Biblical texts can also be interpreted on several levels:

1. The lexical (body): an interpretation based on the surface meaning of the text - taking the writings at face value as an accurate depiction of historical fact.

2. The psychological or ethical (mind) : the vision or dream is explained as a psychological state, an interpretation favored by modern psychology.

3. The spiritual interpretation (soul; sometimes known as the allegorical method, promoted by the Alexandrian school): Although such an interpretation easily becomes arbitrary, resulting in subjective judgement and skewed interpretation, yet its value lies in indicating that the Bible is a book of the Spirit, inspired by God. Consequently, the spiritual exegetical method is highly important and cannot be denied, but it is a method which should be employed with great caution.

No matter whether we speak from the standpoint of 1., 2., or 3., above, "vision" is still that "distant image which comes from heaven," from the revelation of God. That persons, events and concrete situations differ, is not important. If each instance of "vision" in the Bible were to be translated, "distant image from heaven," the message would be clearer and more easily understood and this would not detract in the slightest from the authoritative and prophetic nature of the Bible.

Whichever of the above meanings we apply, each of us who serves the Lord has, at sometime in our lives, seen visions and distant images, has had various spiritual experiences, has had ideals; some have been very clear and concrete, others could not be confined to a specific time or shape. In the Book of Joel it is written, "Your old men shall dream dreams,

and your young men shall see visions. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement, too, is a heavenly vision seen by some progressive servants of God. Today, as we build up the new Chinese church in this very important time, as we meet each challenge and test, we must ask ourselves: "Have we strayed from that heavenly vision?" You have come to theological college because you have seen some distant vision from heaven. You have returned from local churches all over the country for the start of a new semester. In your churches you have seen many things, some greatly inspiring, some perhaps arousing misgivings, as though we, like Paul, are facing the tribunal in the public court. But can we bring to mind at this time the loving heart and resolution we felt when we heard the divine call? Can we say "We have not set aside the distant image from heaven?"

In days to come, no matter whether it be in private meditation during class, worship or church work, wherever we come into contact with other people, I hope we will remember that "heavenly vision."

O Lord, help us that we may be able to rely always on that "heavenly vision." Guide us, strengthen our resolve, invigorate us, that following in Paul's footsteps, we may go courageously forward. Enable us, in any place, at any time, to witness to the Gospel and be loyal servants of God with unswerving faithfulness. Amen.

*Nanjing Theological Review, Nos. 6 and 7 (September, 1987), p.50.
translated by Jill Hughes*

16. Offering and Sign – Han Pide

Text: John 6:1-14

With five loaves and two fishes, the Lord fed the five thousand. The story is familiar to all of us. During the recent visit by a delegation from churches in Jiangsu to churches in Hong Kong, I was fortunate to be able to share my thoughts on this story with brothers and sisters of St. Mary's Anglican Church. In my message I took up three points in this story from which we may gain inspiration.

(1) "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"

The Lord Jesus asked this question of his disciples that day. Faced with the hungry multitude, he asked them, "How are we to buy bread ... ?"

This is the same question which the Chinese church is facing today. Taking Jiangsu province as our example, we might pose the problem as "many sheep but few shepherds." "Many sheep" refers to the fact that we have many churches and meeting points, and many Christians. In Jiangsu as a whole there are 365 churches large and small and about 600 meeting points (by which I mean worship gatherings held in Christian homes) to accommodate about 300,000 Christians. "Few shepherds" refers to the fact that church personnel in the province (including pastors, elders and evangelists) number only about 200.

This problem of "many sheep but few shepherds" is a constant source of trouble for us. The question the Lord Jesus put to his disciples is an extremely practical and extremely urgent one for Jiangsu province: how are we to nourish so many believers? How are we to enable their needs to be met within the church? Where shall we find the means to solve this problem?

(2) Look not outside, but within.

When Jesus posed his question, Philip's response was, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

There are two ways to solve a problem: one is to rely on an external solution - to take money and buy what is needed. This was Philip's method. The other method is Andrew's way: to look within where a solution can truly be found.

Thanks be to God, the Chinese church, with God's guidance, abides by the three-self principle (self-government, self-support and self-propagation) and is even now dealing step by step with the problems which face us. Returning to our example of Jiangsu province, we have two methods for accomplishing this. On the one hand, we recommend outstanding young Christians for entrance to Nanjing Union Theological Seminary - forty students have been recommended in this way, with twenty-three of those presently engaged in studies. On the other hand, we have held fourteen lay training sessions at provincial, municipal and county

levels, which have produced over 500 trainees. This work will continue. In the past seven years, we have also produced over fifty pastors, elders and evangelists. These are first steps in dealing with the lack of church personnel.

The problem of church construction is also being solved from within. In these seven years, we have had continual reports of home gatherings which have made the transition into regular church congregations. There are 200 such churches in the province and that number is gradually growing. These churches have all been built by Christians themselves with their own hands. The support which the Provincial Christian Council and the Provincial Three-Self Movement is able to give is extremely limited. Thus, the majority of money, effort and initiative in the construction of new church buildings comes from the Christians themselves. Larger churches which have been built in this way can accommodate 500-600 people; the smaller ones, 100-200 people.

(3) Where there is an offering, there is a sign!

The Lord was able to feed the five thousand because there was a boy among them who had five loaves and two fishes. He was brought before Jesus by Andrew and offered his loaves and fishes to the Lord who used them to satisfy the five thousand.

The Chinese church is a small part of the church universal. The Jiangsu church is not a large one among the churches of the China. In terms of strength, then, we are small and weak. But we share one mind and that is to place our tiny vessel in the Lord's hand as an offering. We believe that, small as we are, naught but five loaves and two fishes, we need only offer ourselves to the Lord and he will make of us a wonderful sign. Thus blessed by the Lord, the Chinese church, and the church in Jiangsu, can certainly shepherd well its own sheep.

All glory be to God. Amen.

November 8, 1987

translated by Janice Wickeri

17. Seeking the Place Where the Lord Is – Wu Ai'en

Text: John 12:20-26

There is a story called, "An Eastern House for Eating and a Western House for Sleeping." The story goes as follows. A family had an only daughter. The parents pampered her from childhood and considered her quite precious. When the girl reached marriageable age, her parents took great pains to find her a suitable husband, but in this their opinions were divided. The father selected a young man from an eastern village for his daughter. This family was very rich, and the father was determined to give his daughter in marriage to the son of this wealthy family. The mother, however, chose a youth from a western village. Although the man was poor, his character was very good. So the mother was adamant that her daughter marry into this family. The daughter was in quite a quandary, until she thought of a solution. She said to her parents: "Stop arguing. I'll go to the home in the eastern village to eat and to the home in the western village to sleep. That will solve everything." Of course, this is only a story. Such a solution could not be implemented. No society would permit such a thing to happen.

But are there not some people today whose state of mind is similar to that of the girl in the story ? That is , their hearts are in the western village, while their bodies are in the eastern village. Their hearts and bodies are not at one. Ideals and reality run counter to one another. Theory and practice are at odds with one another. If a person's faith is divorced from his or her life, such a person's faith and character are imperfect. "A giant in words, but a dwarf in deeds" is the most undesirable thing a person can be. Faith means life for us, and it is also our way of living. John 5:24 reads: "He who believes in him who sent me has eternal life." The Epistle of James 2:17 says: "Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." Can a person's religious life be separated from his life in society ? If a person bases her actions on a dichotomy between faith and life, then that person's faith is incomplete. It is impossible for such a person to bear witness to the Lord in the midst of the masses. To be light and salt is manifested in real life. Only when the lamp is placed on the lampstand does it shed light all around. Put under a bushel basket, it fails to fulfill its function. If the salt does not dissolve into the food, but just remains big salt grains, then people will spit it out and it will be utterly worthless.

A Christian should offer his or her whole nature, whole spirit, and whole life to the Lord, and become united with Christ as if sharing a common body. Christ himself is love. We live in the Lord and the Lord lives in us. Each of us Christians must love Christ above all. The Lord asks us to love him more deeply than anything else (John 21:15). With Christ as the core, and you and I both loving him, then the love we share in Christ brings about love among the brothers and sisters. In this way we exist in the Lord's love, and the Lord's love is present in our midst.

1 Corinthians 13:8 reads: "Love never ends." The Korean Bible has: "Love will never leave us." Where "Love" is, there are we also. This is what is meant by what Ruth said to Naomi. Ruth told the old lady: "Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge;

your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there I will be buried ... unless death separates us one from the other." This symbolizes the love that exists between Christ and the Christian.

Today we are going to look for the place where the Lord resides. Where is he to be found?

The Lord Jesus is not in the palace of the Hebrew kings, nor is he on Caesar's throne. He did not grow up in a prosperous Jerusalem. Nor did he consort with those hypocritical religious professionals: the priests, the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus went alone into the wilderness to pray, and from prayer he obtained strength. Then after conquering temptation through the work of God, he set out upon his mission of preaching the Gospel. The Lord attracts those who hunger and thirst for justice. He goes to dwell in their midst and satisfies their cravings. The Lord attracts the humble and the obedient. He goes to dwell in their midst and causes them to be raised up. The Lord attracts the poor, the sick, the worried and the sad. He dwells among them and brings them comfort and good health. He makes them a new people and sharers in heaven's blessings. From history we see that the Lord has been active among those scientists who have worked for the betterment of humanity. He has caused their discoveries to be beneficial for human life. The Lord has blessed the efforts of those who have traveled far and wide campaigning for justice and peace in the world. And at the present time, our attention is drawn to this : the Lord is present among those who are working conscientiously to develop and strengthen our motherland. He blesses the miracles they are producing in our midst. The Lord blesses us even more because he has entrusted to us the task of pastoring his flock. The Lord transverses mountains and hills in search of a single lost sheep, until he finds it. At the most painful time of his crucifixion, the Lord still made use of the very last moment of his life to save a human soul. At times in my pastoral work I have faced responsibilities which I found difficult to bear. I became discouraged and lost heart. I even felt like hiding in a cave on a mountainside. But the Lord had mercy on me; through the prayers and tears of the disciples, the Lord held me up. Although I am weak, the Lord manifested his power in the body of a weak person. He made me persevere in my duty of preaching the Gospel.

The truth I am witnessing to today is: seeking the place where the Lord resides. When we seek to follow the Lord, then we must go to the places where the Lord has been and serve the people. The Lord said: "Where I am, the person who serves me will also be." Wherever the Lord went, it was not to receive love or to make demands. Rather he desired to give of himself, and to bestow love and compassion. I Corinthians 13:4 reads: "Love does not seek its own advantage, does not rejoice at the wrong, but rejoices with the right." If we want to go to the place where the Lord is, we must become like the Lord Jesus himself. We must sacrifice ourselves and serve others, not seeking our own benefit. Paul pointed out to the church of Thessalonica (1Thess. 1:3) how precious was "labor done out of love." The love of Christ is in the hearts of each us Christians. The labor we expend for the people's benefit is very precious. Even more precious is labor expended in preaching the Gospel. Both are the effects of Christ's love. Through toil endured out of love, we can more deeply appreciate the Lord's love for us, and experience the sufferings that the Lord took upon himself for us. This is just the place where the Lord resides. Although there is suffering there, the Lord gives us

his peace and strength. It is with the Lord there that we derive renewed faith and strength. We take up anew the Lord's yoke and go forward.

We Korean people are members of the great family of the motherland. The Lord dwells in the midst of the Korean people and in the midst of each of our fellow nationalities. Every Christian from each nationality has a common mission and a common purpose with all the people of the country. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, today in this place each nationality's Christians have the opportunity to offer common worship to God. Let us bear witness to the Lord, and make the Lord come alive in the great family of our motherland. This is what the Lord asks of us.

Finally, let us cite a verse of Scripture for our mutual encouragement. In John 14:23, the Lord Jesus says: "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

*Morning Worship at the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, August 1986. Collected Documents of the Fourth National China Christian Conference, p.48.
translated by Peter Barry, M.M.*

18. God's Loving Hands – Qi Tingduo

Text: Jeremiah 1:9-10; Acts 20:28

Wanting to be in Jerusalem before Pentecost, the Apostle Paul decided not to go to Ephesus. Affectionately recalling the three years he spent personally establishing and nurturing the church at Ephesus, Paul sent a messenger from Miletus to Ephesus to invite the elders to meet with him. He expressed to them his urgent need to go to Jerusalem and that this would be their last time to meet. He solemnly concluded: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Paul also told them: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30).

These words have tremendous value and significance for God's servants today. To be God's servant, one must always be vigilant: toward one's self and toward the whole church, one must be a loyal servant, and a shepherd to the sheep.

The church was established by Christ, called out by Christ here on earth. Each church relies upon Him, Christ the Head of the church, in whom the whole structure is joined together and becomes a united church (Eph 2:13-22).

Since the day of Pentecost, the church has had to preserve its purity, guarding against heresies and protecting itself against divisiveness. With one accord, the early Christians constantly served Christ in the temple, in prayer and breaking of bread at home, and persevered in observing the apostles' teachings. And God added to their numbers daily. In their daily lives the apostles enjoyed immense support of the masses. This was the situation in the early church.

But historically the church in every age has frequently departed from and profaned this beautiful image of the early church. This was particularly true of the church in China. A hundred years ago the model of mission board control and western influence was the rule in China. Although in form the church spread throughout the land, the Gospel was widely proclaimed and many social service! carried out with considerable success, a realistic look at the past one or two hundred years of history proves that under the mission boards' policy of comity there were only seven or eight hundred thousand believers. Among the Chinese people the Chinese church was called a "Western church." This was the reality of the church in China in the past.

But thanks to God, who, following Liberation in the early 1950s, raised up pioneers like Y.T. Wu and other shepherds very much like the prophet Jeremiah. In fact the spirit of the prophet Jeremiah was revealed anew to our pioneering shepherds. They founded the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement to change the image of our church from that of a "Western church" to one truly belonging to Chinese believers - just as the churches at Ephesus, Galatia and Philippi belonged to the Ephesians, the Galatians and the Philippians.

The Movement's first step was to remove the divisive walls and "Tower of Babel" created by European and American mission boards and enable the church to receive new life and tread the path of unity. The church in China phased out denominationalism and changed its "Western church" image. This is also a fact. It was God's special grace and love for the church in China; our Lord Jesus cleansing the temple in his role of priest.

Dear Elders, we are servants appointed by the Holy Spirit. Looking through spiritual eyes we see the accomplishments of the past thirty years' work. We can see this was not done by people. Behind all this work was a pair of powerful, omnipotent and invisible hands, namely the loving hands of God. In all this God was personally at work in leading and supporting our predecessors. God was at work with them. For this we give all praise to God, raising a resounding chorus of hallelujah.

God has performed miraculous deeds in our Chinese church. Now the Holy Spirit is leading us to complete the second mission of the prophet Jeremiah, namely establishing and planting, to give new life to the church in China, to enable it to be planted and rooted in this piece of beautiful Chinese soil.

Let us look at Paul's teachings (1Cor. 3:10-15). "For none is able to lay another foundation than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ ... and let each look out how they do the building." First, we should conform with the example of the apostolic church, not the pattern and practice of Mission Boards. Each church united in Christ, joined together in the true word, knowing God's son, and growing in maturity and the fullness of Christ's stature. This time we want to corporately seek God's will, to discern how in China's socialist society we can establish and plant an independent church controlled by us, but also a united church. We absolutely must expend our efforts and services towards a return of sectarian denominationalism and traditional dogma. Even more so we must not become nostalgic for previous "Towers of Babel" nor imitate the Chu people of the Warring States Period who, as the boat continued to sail on, sought the lost sword at the spot on the boat where it had fallen overboard. This is acting without regard changing realities. That would be ridiculous. And impossible.

Beloved Elders, planting is exceedingly arduous work. At time of the Corinthian church, Paul planted the seeds, Apollos watered, but only God enabled the growth. Where do we plant today? Where do we water? History moves on. The approach of the people of Chu is not appropriate. What we need today is the double-edged sword of the Holy Spirit, namely, the word of God. God's truth and theological reflection will enable the church to imitate the example of the apostles, to follow in their footsteps and plant the church firmly in China.

This is not only a problem for theologians to research, but the mission of the entire church. It is our responsibility. It is not a matter of doing or not, of wanting to do or not. The responsibility has already been given to us. Our church was bought with the blood of Christ. Christ is the Head of the church and the Lord of the whole body of the church. Since the church is a spiritual and life-giving group, we want to become a more effective organization,

a group which serves society. This body must be a fellowship, a vital organization and a team.

The church needs to be able to proclaim the Gospel, serve society, serve the people and become a group which contributes to socialist society.

God will daily add new converts to the church, enable the church to be appreciated by the masses and to become a magnificent church. This should be the building and planting work of the church in China. Pray God be merciful to us and continuously revealed to us.

Beloved shepherds, let us labor together under the Lord's leadership!

Opening Worship at the Fourth National Christian Conference.

Collected Documents of the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, p.45.

Translated by Ewing W. Carroll, Jr.

19. Reconciliation – Zhang Jinglong

Text: Matthew 5:24

"First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift."

2 Corinthians 5:18

"He has reconciled us men to himself through Christ, and he has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation."

We Christians all treasure the Word of God in the Scriptures. Yet we should read and live the Word of God which is the source. The purpose and the life energy of reconciliation has never been an easy matter for us Christians. For quite a few Chinese Christians who used to be under the influence of Constantinian-type theology, reconciliation happens only between God and me. This traditional Latinized theology which is characteristic of self-righteousness and self-glorification dominated the thinking of Chinese Christians for decades in contemporary history, and created injured feelings not only among Christians themselves, but also proved to be detrimental to the image of the Gospel message of the love of Christ among the vast majority of non-Christian Chinese. Soon after Liberation in China in 1949, Christians who had been passively accepting what the Westerners had taught them immediately faced the challenge of how the God they believed in could be the cause of the alienation, disharmony and absence of love relationships among their neighbors. The people, who had been downtrodden under the imperialist and reactionary powers, yearned desperately for liberation, for the healing of a country which had been radically disharmonized and for a new country where peace and justice could be realized. They came to realize that it was not God revealed in Christ who had created alienation, disharmony or lack of love among the people, but human beings themselves who had been insensitive to the Word of God, or had simply paid lip service to our Lord Jesus Christ. The essential theme that rings throughout the Scriptures is that, as they rediscovered, it is God in Christ who willed harmony and reconciliation as a healing for the broken relationship between God and humanity, and among persons. Reconciliation for Christians in China in the post-Liberation days was thus understood as the mandate of God. This challenged Christians to adopt an attitude of repentance and a radical openness toward the Living Word of God.

In the past thirty-seven years or so, Chinese Christians have been aware of the fact that love in Christ and reconciliation through Christ are closely interrelated. When Jesus said to the crowds in the Gospel of Matthew, "Leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift," he revealed to us the truth that the love of God and the love of one's neighbor form a beautiful harmony, not in words, but in everyday living and practice. Let this living Word of God grip you tightly until you are part of God's created new being in the world and for the world and against the disharmony and the disunity of the world.

Love and harmony or reconciliation are beautifully twinned in Christ, as love for the sake of harmony is a self-sacrificial healing process. True love never ends with oneself. Jesus' love of God the Father did not end with himself, but was lavishly poured upon us who are sinners. It is through Jesus' self-giving love that "we have received our reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11).

At the end of the 1950's and in the early 1960's, the situation became ripe in China for Chinese Protestants from different denominational backgrounds to achieve a greater harmony through the process of reconciling to the Chinese people in order to further live down the foreign image of the church in China and make Christianity genuinely indigenous. Although there are some elements of disharmony as a result of over-emphasis on class struggle during the time of ultra-leftist influence in Chinese society, the over pattern and wishes for reconciliation never got out of hand until 1966 with the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, all the Chinese people, including many high-ranking Communist Party leaders who advocated harmony and reconciliation among the people, were accused of being unprincipled and bourgeois or of being capitalists. The irony was that seeking harmony or reconciliation became identified with capitalism, which encourages radical polarization among the people. The concept of class struggle was stretched to extremes during the Cultural Revolution which rent the entire social fabric and turned the whole nation into a nightmare. Harmony, which had been regarded as a fundamental principle of people-to-people relationships in China, was bleeding with the people on the cross. To us Chinese Christians this is a central action and symbol from God for the healing of the wounds caused by disharmony, disunity, and absence of love. The end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 heralded an unprecedented national burning desire for harmony, peace, and reconciliation. People all over China were pondering the same questions: Why should disharmony, which is the root cause of common suffering, be the center of our life? Why on earth should class struggle be absolutized, dogmatized and made an idol to be worshipped regardless of the changing social context and current aspirations of the people at large? Certainly the Chinese people are peace-loving and were not willing to suffer. Yet it was the common suffering of the Chinese people, including all religious people, that awakened the whole nation to the consciousness that peace, harmony, stability, and reconciliation were what we were desperately in need of. We needed to heal the wounds left behind by the so-called "Cultural Revolution." Seeking the common ground while reserving differences has been widely practiced throughout China since 1976 and the Protestant Church which emerged again through common suffering with the people gradually gained greater sympathy from the people and the People's Government. The article concerning the policy of religious freedom in the current Constitution which was adopted in 1982 was basically a version proposed to the central government by religious leaders in China.

In today's China, reconciliation is not just the wish and practice of Christians but of people all over the country. But as Christians, how should we understand it and live it? Today's Chinese Christians often talk about the Protestant Church being resurrected with Christ. This experience of resurrection of the Christians in China implies the cost of discipleship for reconciliation through which the Church is reborn under the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

For Chinese Christians today, revelation is the central message of the Scriptures. It is the living Word of God in Christ who has reconciled the world unto Himself. Christ, by way of his unconditional love and reconciliation, makes the world the medium in which all those who practice God's reconciliation, in his name or anonymously, share his life on earth. Reconciliation derives its power from love. When we Christians say love, we always point to God who is the perfect love, who offered his only begotten Son as a living sacrifice to reconcile himself to us and us to him.

Love for reconciliation and through reconciliation is not only a gift from God but also a mission for the Church. This mission involves Christians self-emptying love for one another. This mission is a dynamic *yin-yang* process in which our way of following Christ for reconciliation has to be centripetal in our hearts and minds as a divine mandate. At the same time our passion for reconciliation has to be centrifugal in the form of outgoing practice of reconciliation in everyday life through the medium of history and the world.

The gift of and the mission for reconciliation are complementary aspects of the living Word of God. To live in Christ and for the sake of Christ is intertwined with our living in the world and for the world. To live in this harmony and for this harmony we need to move from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness; from Church-centeredness to world-centeredness. This is because Christ is the living power for reconciliation among today's divided humanity in the world. To live in and with Christ we need to grow in fellowship not only with Christians who are different from us but also to grow in *koinonia* with our non-Christian neighbors who are willing to be reconciled for harmony and peace.

Reconciliation is nothing abstract. It starts from where you are. Many centuries ago the Chinese sage Confucius was already aware of the ultimate truth in relationship to harmony and reconciliation. Harmony and reconciliation, according to Confucius embrace the consistent cultivation or internalization of gentleness as well as a person's externalized gentleness towards others. The most famous Taoist scholar in Chinese history, Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu), in defining his principle of life, said that in order to truly follow the Tao a person should reconcile the two aspects of human life namely, "to be sagely within and kindly without." In terms of our Christian faith, reconciliation is a living process of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit from within oneself and harmonizing oneself with his or her neighbor from without. Anyone who lives in this Spirit-initiated reconciliation process dwells in Christ and therefore is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

The reconciliation process in China is now opening up new perspectives and horizons for God's future in China. It will be a long and hard process with inevitable setbacks and no doubt some stumbling blocks here and there from within the church or without the Church. But since this reconciliation is well under way, the Spirit of our Lord will continue to facilitate this process for the sake of his created world and humanity. Chinese Christians have also come to realize that reconciliation has to start from where you are and from one's own social, political and cultural context. Yet this does not mean that reconciliation is, or has to be, only local. The Spirit of Christ transcends locality and enables reconciliation to happen

globally. This global reconciliation process has been highly appreciated by Chinese Christians as well as all Chinese people. Our visit this time is, we believe, part and parcel of this global reconciliation process for the peace, harmony, and unity of the world in the Spirit of Christ. We pray for the world to be renewed in greater harmony, for God was, has been, and will still be, the Creator, Sustainer and Omega of the shalom of the universe. AMEN.

Europe, August, 1987

20. The Church of Our Lord — Gao Ying

Text: Acts 20:28

It is said in Eph. 1:22 that God has put all things under Christ's feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Col. 1:17 also says: "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church." From these verses we can clearly see that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and the church is his body. This is the first level of spiritual meaning of the church.

In the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament, God called his children "a holy nation." They were "the remnant" of the Israelites, whom God loved and had especially chosen to become his possession and his people. As 1 Pet. 2:9 says: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people," the Israelites were chosen not because of any special merit of their own, but entirely out of the grace of God. 1Cor. 12:27 says: "You are the body of Christ and ... members of it." This means that the church is made of people who have been called by God. They have experienced his saving grace, having been redeemed from all iniquity and purified to become his people (Tit. 2:14) and to become the body of Christ. Christians are members of Christ's body. They are completely joined to the body, from which they cannot be separated. As the Scripture says: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). Since there is only one body, there is only one head. The sole head of the church is our Lord Jesus Christ. The church must exalt the Lord by ascribing to him the supreme position and kingly power. All work of the church should be done in the name of Christ, for he is the foundation of the life of the church. This foundation of the church is laid by God, and no other foundation can be laid by any one else (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the head, uniting all members of the church into one body. The body is related to the head in life and in obedience.

Since the church is Christ's body, which consists of God's chosen people, she is not a social organization set up by human beings but is the abode of Christ's life, the extension of Christ's incarnation, and a fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The church is a fellowship of love, in which the believers have communion through the Holy Spirit. This is the second level of spiritual meaning of the church.

When we refer to the church, we always say that she is a fellowship in which there is communion among brothers and sisters in the Spirit. We call her a fellowship and not an organization, because the word "fellowship" has a deeper spiritual meaning. It indicates a sharing and communion among members in Christ. This relationship in Christ's love is spiritual, and is not an ordinary human relationship. The believers' communion with the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of the church takes a corporate form, as it is said in the Scripture: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). The nature of the church's fellowship is manifest when brothers and sisters gather for a corporate worship on Sunday. Therefore, when we come to the church, it is not only for

personal needs of one's religious life, but also, through the act of corporate worship, for sharing the love of Christ, receiving the grace of God, sharing the feeling of love Christ has enabled each member to express, and enjoying fellowship in Christ.

I remember coming to the church for the first time after Beijing Church reopened in 1980. I was excited because I sensed something in the church that was different from the outside world. I did not feel like a stranger even though I did not know anybody. I found friendly smiles on people's faces, and from their kind words and expressions I felt as if I had known them before and that I had become a member already. I felt a warm stream of love that flowed from these brothers and sisters and ran through my whole body, and I was deeply touched. I am sure many of you have had the same kind of experience.

Yes, the church is a fellowship of mutual love of the believers. Because the church is filled with love, she is able to proclaim the message of love in her witness to God. 1John 4:12 says, "No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us," because "God is love." The presence of God's love enables the church to have a special kind of attraction to people who originally know nothing about the church. These people become interested in knowing more about the church, and finally join the fellowship of the church. People seek such love because it is not an ordinary kind of love, nor a human kind of love. It is a spiritual love that transcends human emotion; it comes from above - it is Christ's love. In God's love we see our sins and inequities; the love shown on the cross moves us to confess our sins, repent, and be born again. Through the life of mutual love among the various members of the church, we experience mutual understanding, respect, care and comfort, and enjoy ministering to one another. This is the kind of love that is found among members of the body of Christ, the kind of love that seeks to be reconciled to God and to humanity through Christ. This is also the kind of love that each of us Christians, who have been saved and born again by the grace of God, experiences in the spiritual life of the church. This is the reason why we feel that the fellowship of the church is an indispensable part of our personal spiritual life.

However, I have heard some brothers and sisters say that sometimes they do not get any benefit from coming to worship. Even I have felt the same way. But when I kept silent in God's presence, he made me see my own weaknesses and deficiencies. I thought that the purpose of attending the worship service was to listen to the sermon. But the worship does not consist only of delivering and listening to the sermon. God is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. This requires us to worship with a sense of dedication and single-mindedness. Worship is not a mere ceremonial act or external form but is a commitment of one's total being. When we enter into worship with all our mind and soul, we may discover that God's message comes through every hymn, every prayer, and the reading of the Scriptures. Christians who have the experience of being saved are capable of evoking in themselves a sense of awe in the course of worship, thus achieving true worship. Through worship, we are spiritually satisfied in two ways. One comes from God. Through prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and supplication we come face to face with God to communicate with him and to receive grace and power from him. The other comes from fellow believers. By worshipping together with one mind and one spirit, we are able to share the joy of communion with members of the same body and enhance our spiritual growth. Corporate

worship also enables us to feel that there is a close tie between individuals and the church, and thus strengthens our sense of belonging and makes us regard the church as our family.

The church is the family of God. This is the third level of spiritual meaning of the church.

The church as the family of God has two implications. One concerns the relationship between the believers and the church. If the church is the family of God and the believers her members, then the believers must have a sense of responsibility to love and care for the church. This is a direct relationship between the church and the believers. The other concerns the mutual relationship among the believers. This is an indirect relationship of brothers and sisters. God is the master in our household. Whatever the master requires, the servants must follow faithfully. Therefore, we must do our best to serve the church in all matters large or small, and faithfully carry out whatever is entrusted to us.

I live at Huadong Seminary, where I have seen brothers and sisters who work in the dining hall get up at four or five o'clock in the morning to cook for fellow students. They work very hard without caring how much time they spend or how much they get paid. Some of them put all of their pay into the offering box as soon as they receive it. They are like faithful servants who regard the dining hall as their home, and they love and care for their younger brothers and sisters in the seminary as they would their own family. I have also seen many older sisters from our Shanghai Community Church come here to sweep and clean every Friday afternoon, whether on hot summer days or in winter's severe cold. Some of them are quite advanced in age, but they still climb up high to clean the windows. There are also many believers who come here every Sunday to work as volunteers. It touches me deeply to see brothers and sisters so dedicated to serve the church. They do so out of their love for the Lord and for the church. Without love, there will be no service. Only when one regards the church as the family of God and one's own self as a servant in this household, can one serve with a grateful heart. One may be able to see then that to be able to serve is a privilege, and therefore offer, out of love, one's time, energy, and money to the church. Through active participation in the ministry of the church, the work of the house of God - the church - may be carried out satisfactorily. I am with you in offering thanks and praise to God for the love and loyalty shown by our brothers and sisters.

The church is not only the family of God but also the pillar and foundation of truth. This truth "was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). Since the Lord is the truth, he must be proclaimed. This was what Lord Jesus ordered the disciples to do after his resurrection and right before he ascended to heaven: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk. 16:15). Therefore, preaching the gospel is the mission of the church. This is the fourth level of spiritual meaning of the church.

The gospel belongs to all peoples. The church is to bear the responsibilities of Christ's saving work on earth by witnessing to the gospel, spreading the truth, and saving those who are lost. Preaching of the gospel is the sacred vocation of the church, the work of God's hand, and an act of the Holy Spirit. The permission of the Holy Spirit is necessary whenever and wherever God's servants go out to preach the gospel. It is said in the Acts of the Apostles that

in the early church, when the apostles were sent out to preach, they were sent by the Holy Spirit "for the work to which [the Lord has] called them" (Acts 13:2). When they attempted to go to Bithynia to spread the gospel but the Holy Spirit did not allow them, Paul and others obeyed the direction of the Holy Spirit. It was after they had seen a vision in which the Holy Spirit wanted them to go to Macedonia that they responded to the call and went to preach the gospel to people there (Acts 16:10).

Throughout the history of the church, many Christians were so moved by the Holy Spirit that they gave up everything and dedicated their whole life to the preaching of the gospel to all parts of the world. A number of them came to China, too. Although so of them did things that did not bring honor to the name of the Lord, many of them came with great enthusiasm solely to spread the gospel. I am sure our brothers and sisters in China would like to remember in Christ these latter people for their work.

The mission of the church is to proclaim the saving truth of Christ. In concrete terms for individual Christians, this means lead people to Christ. In Acts 6:4 it says: "[You] will devote [yourselves] to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Here "you" includes apostles and disciples. Therefore, preaching the gospel is not only the work of the church but is also the work of all of us; it is the duty of each of us Christians.

When I was doing my fieldwork at Beijing Church, I heard the following testimony. There was a young lady who went to church for worship every Sunday. After a period of time, she asked the minister to baptize her. The minister asked her how she had come to believe in the Lord. She said that in her work unit there was a doctor who always worked diligently and was very gentle, considerate, and attentive to her patients. It puzzled her why this doctor had been doing such a wonderful job without expecting any gain. Later on she learned that the doctor was a Christian. So this young lady went to the church out of curiosity. She wanted to know what it was like to be a Christian and why Christians are different from other people. Thanks be to God, this sister has since gone through the stages of inquiring, of being baptized, of receiving God's call, and finally has chosen the way to dedicate herself. Right now she is in seminary, preparing herself to be a minister.

This testimony tells us that no matter how the social environment changes, the pursuit of truth is a basic human need. The gospel is offered to all humankind; everyone needs the saving grace and the word of God. Today especially, God lets us see his wonderful deeds. Many people were hungry for truth, but they did not have the opportunity to hear the gospel. Yet God worked through the good deeds of Christians around these people and they were moved by the Holy Spirit to seek the Lord, come to church, find the gospel, and finally accept the Lord. The work of these Christian brothers and sisters is like "gold and precious gems." They bear fruits for the Lord, and it pleases him. As Christians, we believe that the gospel is eternal truth. Therefore, the church should never cease to preach the gospel in any age. Otherwise, she would lose the power to bear witness to God.

Through the incessant prayers and thanksgiving of our brothers and sisters, God has opened up the gateway for spreading the gospel today, and many people are coming to seek the saving truth of Christ. This is God's special favor to the church in China, that the number

of the saved increases day by day. For this, many brothers and sisters, who love the Lord and the church, offer, on behalf of the church in China, their thanks and praise before God with joyful hearts. They pray that the Spirit of the Lord will fill the church and bestow on her the power to witness for the gospel, because the church is "of the Spirit." The church is "of the Spirit." This is another level of spiritual meaning of the church that I would like to share with you.

The church was bought with the blood of the Lord. She was built for us by the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord sent after he had ascended to heaven. She is a "spiritual house" built with "living stones." She is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and not a political institution. Her nature is spiritual. If she loses her spiritual nature, she loses her proper function and effect.

All work of the church is guided by the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be replaced by human wishes. Only when we look to the edification of the Holy Spirit in all of the church's work can we be led to understand all truths and act according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, thus making the church an outlet for spreading God's message.

The Holy Spirit is a person, whose work in the church is not abstract but manifests itself through baptism, the Lord's Supper, the communion of believers through the gospel, personal gifts, stewardship work, and many other things.

The baptism we receive is given in the name of the Lord, therefore it is a baptism of the Holy Spirit, representing God's saving grace. When we are baptized by the Holy Spirit, our sins are forgiven by the grace of God, and we receive a new birth.

The Lord's Supper instituted by our Lord is a covenant he set up between us and himself with his blood, in remembrance of his redeeming grace on the cross. The bread and the cup are not just material substance; they symbolize the body and the blood of our Lord and thus carry a deeper spiritual meaning.

The varieties of gifts in members of the body of Christ "an inspired by" the Holy Spirit, "who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1Cor. 12:11). These gifts are not human functions. The sacred vocations of God's servants in the church are also gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Lord said : "On my menservants and my maidservants I will pour out my Spirit" (Acts 2:18) Therefore, ministers should seek to be filled by the Holy Spirit, so that they may have more power to witness to the Lord.

The Church is "of the Spirit," therefore all work in the church be it the sermon, Bible study, prayer, hymn singing, visitation, of anything else, should be conducted by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the sole generator of power for the Church's work. Our Lord said to Peter: "On this rock I will build my church." This is not just the Lord's proclamation to Peter, but is also what he bid the Christians to do. Therefore, building the church and praying for the church are the responsibilities of every single Christian.

In the eyes of God, the church in China is still in the process of growing up. God expects the church to "mature" so that she no longer needs milk but learns to take solid food. I trust that all brothers and sisters will also sustain the church with their prayers, We shall place our church completely in the hands of God, asking the Lord to build her, to revive her, and continue to lead and show favor to her. We pray that she may take root in our land and, under God's blessing, become the new bride of Christ to lead all peoples to him, and that she may be able to offer abundant witnesses to the Lord, in order to prepare with joyful heart the wedding feast for Christ the bridegroom when we receive a new heaven and a new earth.

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translated by Lucy T.H. Loh

21. Salt in New Bowls – Ji Tai

Text: 2Kings 2:19-22

When we speak of salt, we immediately recall the words of Jesus: 'You are the salt of the earth' (Mt. 5:13). Salt as a seasoning functions to harmonize differences (Mark 9:50). Salt also guards against spoilage. One of the regulations regarding sacrifices in Leviticus says: "You shall season all your cereal offerings with salt" (Lev. 2:13). In the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel we find that salt is beneficial as a cleansing agent for the body. In the passage from 2Kings, we see a special property of salt - to bring water and soil under control. This was a miracle God performed through the prophet Elisha.

The city of Jericho was situated in the Jordan River valley, only nineteen miles from the river itself. Not far to the south of the city lay the Dead Sea. The soil there was fertile, the climate warm. From ancient times it was lauded as "the city of palm trees" (Deut. 34:3), just as the men of Jericho said to Elisha, "the situation of this city is pleasant." It was a place which armies fought over; the Israelites conquered Jericho in their first battle after crossing the Jordan.

In Elisha's time, there was a very famous guild of prophets in Jericho. Elisha was a pupil of Elijah. One day as Elisha was plowing in the fields, Elijah came and cast his mantle over Elisha and Elisha was deeply moved. Knowing that he had been called, Elisha bade farewell to his family and followed the master (2Kings 19: 19-21). The religious struggles of the time were very fierce. While Elijah was on the earth he won a decisive victory over the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings: 18). Elisha's only request before Elijah was taken up was "I pray you, let me inherit a double share of your spirit" (2Kings 2:9).

After Elijah had been taken up into heaven Elisha came to Jericho. When the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha" (2Kings 2:15) and they explained the situation to him: ". . . the situation of this city is pleasant ... but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful." Because the water was unwholesome, the earth suffered miscarriages, the fruit would fall to the ground before it had ripened, and people and animals would fall sick and die after drinking it. All this they told to Elisha, obviously hoping he would perform a miracle to purify the water. Perhaps they hoped he would use his master's mantle to perform this miracle, because before Elijah had been taken up into heaven, he had used that mantle which he had from his own master to strike the water and part it from one side to the other in order to cross the Jordan (2Kings 2:14). But Elisha did not do this. Instead he instructed them to fetch a new bowl and put salt in it and give it to him. Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt into it and pronounced the words of the Lord: "I have made this water wholesome; henceforth neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it." Thus the miracle happened and that water which had been called "Marah" because of its bitterness (Ex. 15:25) became sweet and from thenceforth people called it "Elisha's Spring."

Like Jericho in Palestine, China is "pleasantly situated." Our country is located in the southeastern part of the Eurasian continent, on the western banks of the Pacific Ocean. It is a

vast land with a long coast line. It falls mainly within the northern temperate or semitropical zones and has an Asian monsoon climate. It should be a place of plenty. But in the past several hundred years it has experienced the phenomenon of "fruit falling to the ground before it has ripened." Much fruit, whether of culture or science and technology, has fallen before ripening and been trampled underfoot. What is the reason for this? Is it because "the water is bad" or unwholesome?

Several thousand years of feudalism has severely constricted our people's thinking; their temperament has been warped to some degree and our people's reflective and creative powers have been greatly fettered. Our whole people have been brought low. Isn't this precisely what is indicated by "unwholesome water?"

But just as he did in Biblical times, God wants to perform a miracle today through his prophet in our time. Who then is our Elisha? This question deserves our thought ... but one thing is clear we Christians should be "salt put into new bowls." In the past, in the "old bowls" - under the control of foreign mission boards - the flavor of the church changed, it was not a seasoning, a preservative, or a cleansing agent for society. It was like the salt the Phoenicians once distilled from the salt water of the Mediterranean Sea and dried into blocks. When kept for a long time, it lost its flavor. Thanks be to the Lord, in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Chinese Christians he has given us a "new bowl," and changed the old face of the Chinese church. In the witness of many of today's brothers and sisters, witness which shows love of church and love of country, which glorifies God and benefits humankind, we see that this salt put into new bowls has not lost its flavor.

But is the flavor strong enough? Do three to five million Christians have sufficient strength to fulfill their role as a percentage of those working for socialist construction? Can the church fulfill its role as regular patriotic people's organization? It is important to identify with the people, but the church must have its particular contribution to make to the people. Salt is one seasoning among many, but it is also the most distinct. If we as salt lose our taste, or if the salt loses its saltiness, it will be very difficult to avoid being "thrown out and trodden under foot by men" (Mt. 5:13).

The passage of the Bible in which Elisha purifies the spring shows us that God wants the first salt - we Christians - to complete his work. That is to say, the church must make its special contribution to make the nation thrive and prosper. When Christians are model workers or progressive workers, when the church sets up its own enterprises; such contributions to society are very important, but even more important is that the church offer spiritual nurture to people in society. For instance, when there are pointless squabbles among the people, the church should preach a message of reconciliation; when personal integrity is assaulted, the church should emphasize the value of the person; and so on. As the material standard of living rises, the people's demands for non-material, cultural things should rise with it. Can the church meet the needs of modern people? To put it another way: can we preach a message relevant to the age? This is an extremely important question.

To purify the waters of our society, the church must become true salt. The church must use the salvific gospel of Christ, its overarching religious virtue, its unique value system, to

help the people in cleansing themselves of the sediment of several thousand years of feudal thinking that they may become new people able to construct a modernized socialist country. The church should preach justice and fight corruption wherever it is found in society: the crippling patriarchal system, the "special privileges" mentality, autocratic work styles, the devaluation of women and every type of outmoded or base habit and custom, as well as the recent tendency to "see everything in terms of money." Speaking the Lord's word in language modern people understand. This is what it means to preach a message relevant to the age and this constitutes the "saltiness" of the church.

So long as we are truly the salt put into new bowls - that flavored by Christianity - and are poured out into the water - dissolving into the people - we will certainly hear the words of Jehovah: "I have made this water wholesome," and our nation will be blessed by God, and will prosper; and our people will be the more willing to accept the gospel and belong to God.

Translated by Janice Wickeri

ART: CHRISTIAN SEAL CARVING

Seal Carving with Christian Themes

In Chinese culture, the written language has traditionally been viewed with both affection and reverence. The written form of the language, known as calligraphy, has served for centuries as an important vehicle of artistic expression no less prestigious than the renowned landscape paintings. Seal carving has evolved as another expression of the artistic potential of written Chinese. Carved with a personal name or an official title, a line of poetry or even a drawing, seals have served as a means of identification or authorization, as a lasting mark of the connoisseur's appreciation stamped on paintings, or, cut into rare or unusually-shaped stones, as prized collectors' items in themselves.

Given the importance of the Word for Christian faith, seal carving provides the Chinese artist working in Christian themes with a fitting medium for joining cultural form to theological significance. The pages of *Tian Feng* have carried numerous examples of seal carving in recent years; those on the following pages represent a small sample of an important Chinese art form by means of which the universality of Christian witness has been uniquely indigenized.

An observation on the functions of Christian art by Mr. He Qi, art instructor at Nanjing Theological Seminary, reveals the approach of artists in China who have been exploring the task of indigenizing Chinese Christian art:

The churches of different peoples bring their own special gifts to the ecumenical church and how greatly is that church enriched thereby! Since God has created all different races, he assuredly takes pleasure in the diverse artistic styles in which they express their praise of him and join together to participate in this excellent process of creation. It is precisely because there are no limits to God's creativity and love that the forms in which this limitlessness is praised can also be infinite.



May God be with you. (Immanuel) Mt. 1 : 23 artist: Xiao Hui



Justified by faith. Rom. 4 : 26 artist: Xiao Hui





Christmas artist: Xiao Hui



Faith, Hope, Love. 1 Cor. 13: 13 artist: Yu Zijian

DEVOTIONS

22. Lilies of the Field (Excerpts) – A book of devotions by Wang Weifan

by way of preface ...

Consider the lilies of the field (Mt. 6:28)

The beauty of life does not lie in what we put on; but in bearing life's hardships without losing sight of its charm; in encountering the vagaries of the world without losing sight of its beauty. For the adornments the Father gives to his daughters and sons are carved and painted in the deepest recesses of the soul.

The tiny flowers of the field ask nothing for themselves and covet nothing. They are silent, but in their silence adorn the field. Their lives are brief; they appear quickly, go quickly. Yet their conscience is clear and they leave behind their fragrance to the land that nourished them.

With the Holy Spirit and with fire (Mt. 3:11)

Christ feeds and waters his church not with the Holy Spirit only; he also sends down fire to burn it. He sends not only grace and pity, but a sword. Always Christ is the refining fire which seeks to purge the dross and bring out pure gold. Like bleach he removes the stains from the cloth, returning it to its original cleanliness. He winnows without rest, separating the chaff and gathering in the wheat. Christ never finishes pruning his trees, cutting off the barren branches so as to bring forth good fruit.

Lord, enable us to know, not only your mercy, but your strict discipline as well; not only your pity and grace, but also your anger and power. May your church, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and through fire, be pure and without flaw!

Out into the deep (Luke 5: 4-7)

Simon and his companions toiled through the night without catching anything, but obeying Jesus' command to "put out into the deep," they caught many fish in their nets.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision in which water issued from the temple towards the east. At first, it was only ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then up to the waist; finally, it became a river. Only when he ventured out into the deep could he see that the banks of that river were lined with trees whose leaves would never wither and whose fruit would never fail.

In the course of our spiritual journey, as children of God, we cannot always stay in the shallows. We must go ever deeper. In seeking the source of life, we must come to God's temple, but to find the fullness of life, we must leave the temple behind. The further we go, the deeper the river. Only "out into the deep" can we gather more fruit for God. Only "out into the deep" will we catch more fish.

And then come and offer your gift (Mt. 5:24)

We are always concerned about the state of our relationship with God, but God is always concerned about our relationships with others.

God asks not simply, "Where are you?" but also "Where is your brother? Where is your sister?" Not every gift which is placed upon the altar finds favor with God. If something is wrong between my sister and I or if my brother has something against me, God will not accept my gift, no matter how good it may be. Thus I must first leave my gift at the altar, go and be reconciled with my brother or sister, and only then return and offer my gift.

What kind of relationships do we have with our family? With our neighbors? With the people we meet each day? Unless our relationships with all these people are set upon the proper course, our gift will always be left at the altar and will never be a pleasing sacrifice to God.

And this will be a sign for you (Luke 2:12)

Our Lord, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, came unnoticed into this world as a helpless babe one silent night in Bethlehem. He did not come to a palace, but lay down in a humble manger; he was not robed in silks, but wrapped only in common swaddling cloths.

"A babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger": this is the sign of our Savior's birth, signifying weakness, humility, the ordinary, and simplicity.

The ordinary, simplicity, weakness, humility. The signs of Christ's birth should also be the signs of his body - the church. For it is only in the ordinary and in simplicity that the glory and richness of God can be made manifest; only in weakness and humility that the wisdom and power of God can be made known.

You have been faithful over a little (Mt. 25:21)

People have different gifts. What Christ requires of us and the tasks which are entrusted to us differ accordingly.

God will surely not require of us what is greater than our strength. God requires simply loyalty in a few things. We are called to pour ourselves out according to what has been given to us.

The rewards of work are neither honor nor prizes; even less money or position. The rewards of work are yet more work and a share in the joy of Jesus Christ.

Let us hearken to Christ's voice: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master!"

That no one may deprive me of my ground for boasting (1Cor. 9:15)

Those who preach the gospel must depend on it for their livelihood. This was God's original command. But Paul never made use of this right to support in dealing with the church in Corinth. He often accepted things from the church in Philippi, but from the Corinthians he took nothing, so that those hostile to him would have no grounds for complaint.

"For I would rather die, than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting." Such was the spiritual integrity of Paul. All God's daughters and sons, all God's workers, should have spiritual integrity like this.

The Chinese church's grounds for boasting are precisely that she asks nothing in return for doing God's work, but says with Paul, ". . . I would rather die, than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting."

Ephphatha (Mark 7:34)

"Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened!" By the power of his word, Jesus Christ cured the deaf and dumb man from Decapolis, opening his ears and loosening his tongue.

Why did Jesus "look to heaven and sigh?" Because he could open the deaf mute's ears, but he could not open up the hearts of the Pharisees. Conservatism, pomposity, over-scrupulousness and inflexibility: these were the Pharisees' incurable diseases. Like a cloth spread over their hearts, these made them blind to God's deeds and deaf to God's words! The Pharisees were unable to move from Old Testament times into New Testament times.

Times change, but the Holy Spirit will bring light and revelation to each age. Lord, remove our habitual prejudices, take away the blindfold from our hearts, that we may hear your voice, and follow in your footsteps. May your cry of "Be Opened!" resound in our ears, in our times!

Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus (2Cor. 4:10)

The Chinese philosopher Mencius once said: "Misery and hardship are life-giving; a life of carefree ease leads unto death." If this is our experience in the life of the flesh, how much more in the life of the spirit!

Bland comfort cannot help us progress in life. We are tempered by setbacks and trained through difficulty.

Paul followed the Lord throughout his life; and Paul's was a life of misery and hardship. Yet, it was this very hardship, poverty, hunger, thirst, and cold suffered for the sake of Jesus Christ which became the "death of Jesus" which Paul always carried with him and through which "the life of Jesus" was manifest in Paul.

Human life never runs smoothly, we meet with terrifying waves and stormy seas. But the spirit grows most amidst stormy seas and tempering blasts! Lord, grant that in your death, we may find your life.

And a sword will pierce through your own soul also (Luke 2:35)

As the holy infant Jesus was being dedicated to God in the temple, Simon prophesied to Mary: "and a sword will pierce through your own soul also."

When Jesus called out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" the heavenly Father hid his countenance from Jesus because he bore the sins of humanity. On earth his mother, whom "all generations would call ... blessed," fell weeping to the ground at the foot of the cross. The pain of losing her Son was like a sharp and merciless sword piercing Mary's soul.

Yet the true meaning of "blessed" is contained in this: to be of one heart with God; to know God's greatness; to be willing to give one's only son on the sacrificial altar for the sake of God's eternal plan!

O Father, you gave your only begotten Son for the salvation of humankind. All we have, we have from you. Forgive our selfishness, that we may return all we have to you from whence it came, that your will be done.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:45)

When the Lord Jesus called out loudly upon the cross and gave up his spirit, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. With this the estrangement between God and humanity was wiped away because through the blood of Christ we have gained a smooth passageway into the holy of holies. A new path, a living path, opened up from within the rent in that curtain. This torn curtain is the Lord's body.

Jesus has ascended to heaven, but the church represents his body on earth. That body still resembles the torn curtain of the temple, lying between God and humanity. And this curtain too must be torn so that humanity may come into the presence of God.

Lord, who gave your body for humankind, we ask you to so arrange, to so break us, that we may not become stumbling blocks to others as they approach your throne of mercy.

So life is at work in you (2Cor. 4:12)

If not for the sweat of the gardener, flowers would have no beauty or fragrance. Children would not grow healthy and strong without the efforts of their parents. Without the sufferings and sacrifices of their forbears, succeeding generations would not know well-being and happiness.

This is one aspect of the truth of death and resurrection: even as the wheat will not sprout until the seed falls to the earth and dies, the church could not be established or grow to maturity without the toil and tears of the apostles. If death is not at work in us, life cannot be at work in others.

O God, lead us into the truth of death and resurrection, that we may live for others, giving willingly of our sweat and toil, begrudging not even exhaustion acid death.

Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead (Phil. 3:13)

It is difficult to forget the past. But as we go on our spiritual journey, intoxication with past achievements can make us complacent and rigid. If we wallow in past disappointments, we will hesitate to go forward. If we brood over past frustrations, it will be difficult to extricate ourselves from them. The past is water under the bridge. It is better to fix our eyes on what will be than to turn back to what was.

The road you must travel is far. This was God's call to Elijah as he rested under the broom tree. The road we must travel is equally long. When the glory of spring is spread before us, can we really want to be a withered tree? As a thousand sails sweep by, can we be content to be a sunken ship?

Lord, awaken our souls. Save us from exhaustion and confusion, that we may no longer rest beneath our own broom tree, but, relying on the strength we have from God, may we continue to run the course that is set before us.

Our inner nature is being renewed every day (2Cor. 4:16)

Time and difficulties age the outer nature, but they do not necessarily afflict the inner nature with despondency and exhaustion. Even physical impairment of the body need not be a matter for regret. Haven't we all come across many heroes in this world "broken in body but whole in Spirit?"

Chuang Tzu observed that: "There is nothing worse than the death of the heart." This is the greatest tragedy because it suggests that a person's spiritual life is teetering on the edge of hopelessness. A heart inexhaustible; an "inner nature" which is being renewed everyday and which neither ice nor snow can melt, nor storms overcome: in the eyes of God, these are most precious.

God, give me inner strength that I may better become a tent-post in this earthly tent. Relying on you, may what is mortal be swallowed up by life. In this world, let me live for you.

I know how to be abased and I know how to abound (Phil. 4:12)

Paul knew how to endure poverty; in the midst of want, he "coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel," preferring to toil with his own hands to meet his own needs and the needs of those who were with him.

He knew how to respond to plenty; he accepted the Philippians' gifts as he would the most beautiful and fragrant offering, "a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God;" and did not dare to waste them or ask for more.

"Riches cannot corrupt nor want cause him to abandon his integrity." Such was the high standard the ancients set themselves. Uncorrupted by wealth, retaining integrity in poverty: should not this also be the conduct of sons and daughters of God as they tread the spiritual path?

Has the potter no right over the clay? (Rom. 9:21)

God is the potter; we are the clay. As the potter moulds the vessel so are we shaped by the Potter's hands.

We may have been rejected as useless by the world, but God's profound grace will never abandon us. God will turn the potter's wheel and form us anew. As God sees fit, so he has the power to shape us.

God has the power to mould us into vessels for beauty and the power to make us into vessels for menial use. Whatever God does, I am content as long as we can be made useful. But Lord, do not let me defy you, becoming a vessel for wrath awaiting destruction. The vessel may be small, but you will show it the riches of your mercy.

Though I be shattered, I will not complain, for God will gather up the pieces, and when they have been ground to dust and mixed back into the clay, God will work them anew and shape me to his use, in order to realize his beautiful plan.

He is my Lord. Can I compare the potter to the clay? Resist his will? I am but his creation and he my Creator!

For we are his workmanship (Eph. 2:10)

We are his workmanship; as the craft to the crafter or the art to the artist, so are we to God.

Mountains and seas, the sky of night and the clouds of morning: these are God's vast canvas. Yet it gives him greater pleasure to leave the tiniest brush stroke on our hearts. God can sculpt myriad shapes among the eternity of seasons and the annals of history. Yet he finds greater happiness in leaving the mark of his carver's blade on each of us.

Throughout time, the saints have been as varied as the clouds, but each without exception is the product of God's hand. God toils and strives for perfection in me as if I am his sole creation.

Perhaps God pauses in his task now and again, to work out the design, to ponder his art. But more, God waits - for people are not mere strings on a harp. Once we have been lightly plucked, God is willing to wait for us to compose the loveliest of melodies ourselves.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people (1Pet. 2:9)

God has not chosen us to be his people that we might live apart from others or place ourselves above them. Rather, God wants us to be a priesthood to represent the people at the holy altar.

As priests, we must have shoulders which can support the multitude, arms capable of embracing them. We must be like the priests in the Old Testament, who wore shoulder clasps and breastplates mounted with precious stones and inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

We should be like our brethren in all things, not setting ourselves above them. If we act otherwise, we will not know the meaning of mercy and faithfulness. "Supermen" cannot represent the people, because Jesus came, not to save angels, but to save women and men, the descendents of Abraham.

As priests, we must be tested, otherwise it will be difficult for us to understand human weakness. And what is more, we must be conscious of our own weakness, otherwise we will have trouble understanding others lost in foolishness and confusion.

We have not been called because we are in any way superior to others. In fact, we are no different from anyone else, any more than the Levites were cleverer than the rest of the Israelites. Therefore, the honor of the priesthood is not something we can choose for ourselves. No one is worthy. God calls us to it.

You have kept the good wine till now (John 2:10)

Jesus' first miracle was not to free anyone from the pain of serious illness nor wipe away the distress of hunger or thirst. Instead, it was lighthearted, an occasion of happiness.

The miracle of the wedding feast at Cana says to us: there is joy on earth and God wants to enrich that joy, to make it full to overflowing. There is indeed good wine on earth to lift people's spirits, and the Lord tells his servant to bring the better wine when people have drunk their fill.

The saints have always comforted the afflicted and have cared for those in distress. But the Lord Jesus left the best wine until now; perhaps because he wanted us, in this generation, to join our joy to that of others; to be one song among the many.

Of the miracles recorded in John, two especially show forth the glory of God. One is the raising of Lazarus from the dead in the midst of his loved ones' tears; the other is here, where Jesus has kept the best wine till last for the revelers. Thus, the glory of God shines forth, not only in comfort to those who weep, but also in the happiness of the joyous. For the song sung in chorus is always more beautiful than that of a solitary voice.

Buy from me salve to anoint your eyes (Rev. 3:18)

The building up of the church and individual growth both require "gold refined by fire." Before gold has been refined it cannot be pure gold, it cannot turn spiritual poverty to wealth. But we also need a little salve, so that cloudy eyes may be brightened. Otherwise we cannot turn spiritual blindness to clarity.

The eyes of the flesh may be blind, but this does not keep one from seeing the light of truth. But if the eyes of the spirit are clouded, the whole person will be plunged into darkness.

We cannot see clearly the light which illumines the entire way before us. Even with a lamp before our feet, we still need clear sight. Naturally the light is partial, it may cause us to "see, but ... not understand." The value plea by the blind beggar Bartimaeus whom Jesus healed is that he asks for nothing but "that I may see."

Our eyes have been more blessed than those of the prophets of old or those of the righteous. They looked at what we do, but did not see. We must hold fast to the promise God made to Nathaniel and ask that we may see yet greater things - even the heavens opening.

Be aglow with the spirit (Rom. 12:11)

If no fire of love blazes within you, your love for others may be false and insincere. Though you do all you can to help the poor, even giving your body to be burned, but do not have the holy love which comes from within, then it is possible that all you do stems only from a desire for compliments and fame.

Water, even a flood or the convergence of many streams, cannot extinguish the flame of love. Storms cannot dim it, neither snow nor frost kill it, nor threats shake it. Though death draws near, it will not be changed.

"Water does not freeze to a depth of three feet as the result of a single day's cold." To melt a long-frozen heart, one must intensify the warmth. Dying embers may not glow to life again. But it is difficult to catch fire alone - a spark must touch our souls. If we in ourselves are "cold as ice," how can we make others "bloom with color?"

The flames of love cannot be extinguished, nor the spark of love go out. Love, only this flame is eternal.

Love never ends (1Cor. 13:8)

The stream of love flows unending; like oceans it seethes unceasing.

My Lord is the source of Love; I the river's course. Let God's love flow through me. I will not obstruct it.

Irrigation ditches can water but a portion of the field; the great Yangtze River can water a thousand acres. Expand my heart, O Lord, that I may love yet more people. The waters of love can cover vast tracts, nothing will be lost to me. The greater the outward flow, the greater the returning tide.

If I am not linked to Love's source, I will dry up. If I dam the waters of Love, they will stagnate.

Can I compare my heart with boundless seas? But abandon not the measure of my heart, O Lord. Let the waves of your love still billow there!

Everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required (Luke 12:48)

Nurtured and fed for days unto years, all that I am and all that I can do arise from the grace of God. All this is given, not for my own pleasure or adornment, but for service to God and others.

As vessels we differ from one another in size and in gifts. Yet if all alike have loyal and conscientious hearts, ability will increase through use.

One who receives much must also do much. How can I always bury my gifts in the ground? And if I set them aside and do not make use of them, they will be taken from me and added to one who will use them willingly.

God has not entrusted me with these gifts so that I might use them to gain money or position, but that I might work more conscientiously, more diligently for my God. Because much has been given to me, I cannot remain at the pond's edge, but must dare to go forth and tread on thin ice!

My God is a stern God. From one to whom much is given, much will be required. From one to whom much is entrusted, much will be asked. If I have been unworthy of his profound mercy, how shall I fare when I stand before the judgment seat?

A thorn (2Cor. 12:17)

I go forward; I halt: all at God's command. The key is in God's hand, the door his to open or close. When I achieve something in my work, the glory belongs to God; but I am selfish and secretly reserve it for myself. God's door stands, as usual, open when I return all glory to him. If it shuts for a moment, it is to avoid my pride and boastfulness.

Everyone has a thorn in the flesh, a trouble that cannot be overcome or some personal failing. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. God does not remove the thorn, but promises grace. The omnipotence and power of God cover me. When I am weak, God's power shines forth more clearly. My strength is but weakness. Except for God's grace, what can I rely on? Of what shall I boast?

I am but a vessel of clay. There is no fountainhead of grace save the Lord. Let me be even more humble lest I obstruct the Lord's work. My part is to pour myself out. All glory belongs to God. How dare I take it for myself!

Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself (John 6:15)

O Lord, you healed one about to die of disease; commanded the paralytic beside the pool to rise and walk. With a meager five loaves and two fishes, you satisfied the five thousand. All this you did out of pity for the people to the glory of God the Father. Lord most great, you did not want to accept the people's adulation. When you had accomplished your task, you withdrew to the mountain alone.

Abject as I am, how dare I compare myself to you? For I am not like you. I can get involved, but not withdraw. A little fame pleases me. Though the truth belies my reputation, fame intoxicates me. Withdrawal is unthinkable. Personal glory still counts for something with me. Vanity and selfishness, like polluted waters, still churn before my eyes.

A crystal sea spreads itself before God. In the sea there is a fire blazing. May this holy fire ignite my heart, that I enter service to others in society as a red-hot flame. But may my inner self remain calm as that crystal sea, that when I withdraw into God's presence, I do so clear and untroubled by selfishness.

The weakness of God is stronger than men (1Cor. 1:25)

The Father's omnipotence could not serve to save his Son. God loved Jesus Christ with a profound love, yet could not respond to his pleas. Hands vast as the heavens could not withhold the cup of bitterness. Eternal, mighty arms could not protect his only Son. The price of salvation was high, yet the Father had to pay it. Did he not love his Son? And yet, to save the multitude, the Son had to be forsaken.

Love's strength lies in letting go. God did not stint his Son. How much less then does he begrudge creation for us. Love's power is in its steadfastness. Neither life nor death can separate us from this Love!

The weakness of God is incomparable strength. What is so solid that God's love cannot overcome it? My rock-like insensitivity can change to lava; my solid ice melt into spring water.

Not by the armies of Heaven does God conquer us, but by his sacred love - and my heart is captured.

Only that Christ is proclaimed (Phil. 1:18)

What the Christ has entrusted to us is weightier than mountains. I can do nothing alone. I need a helper; others need my help. Only thus can great things can be accomplished. I am weak, my abilities limited. Can a single pillar support the entire house of God? Ears, eyes, hands, feet: all must work together. Can one limb supplant the whole body?

When "God's will be done," the Heavenly Father will rejoice. Why then should we compete for rewards? As long as God's work is done, as long as his name is glorified, must we argue about whose hand achieved it?

Weak as I am, the Lord does not cast me aside. Human beings are not angels; why be overcritical of our brothers and sisters?

Who is genuine? Who is false? This I cannot judge. Personal failure or achievement, honor or humiliation: are these impediments to God?

That members may have the same care for one another (1Cor. 12:25)

Handsome limbs need no adornment, but weak ones require extra care. The suffering of one is felt by all alike. If my brother is despondent, can I be untroubled? The glory of one brings joy to all. When a sister is comforted, don't we all experience greater mercy?

In seeking the common ground, it is easy to overlook minor differences. But if we don't pay attention to these minor differences, our greater unity will be short-lived. If we concentrate our respect on a single member, it will be very difficult to put an end to divisions. Only when members have the same care for one another will there be harmony in love. To join the numerous members together, we must rely on God's love. If the stream of that love flows throughout the entire body, won't all its members be joined to one another?

This body cannot do without its weak members. May our hearts be gentle as the Lord's heart in caring for them. The more solicitude we show over minor differences, the richer will be our common ground.

Sighs too deep for words (Rom. 8:26)

I am weak. Overcoming the flesh is difficult. I resolve to do good, evil is there still. It is difficult to accomplish the desired good as I wish. The unwanted evil is done in spite of my wishes.

My desire is to show every care for the heart of the Holy Spirit. I want to be guided by the Spirit, yet I cannot help my sinfulness. I am in thrall to sin. It is difficult to keep God's precepts; I continue to act against God's heart.

My heart suffers deeply. The Spirit sighs with me, would help me - but I am ever busy about other things. My heart is capricious, restless, a jumbled thread.

I pray God to help me, that I may grow silent in his presence, that my heart of iron may melt to flesh once more. May the sighs of the Holy Spirit, too deep for words, be my heart's cry, that in tranquility I may receive the Spirit as gentle spring rain, silently falling, seeping into my heart.

Open your hearts (2Cor. 7:2)

Li Si has said: "The mountain cherishes the soil which gives it height; the sea does not disdain the water which gives it depth." The boundaries of the realm of the Spirit depend on the narrowness or breadth of the heart.

If our embrace is narrow, we cannot put our arms about another. If we are partial to our own group or attack those who are different: this too is displeasing to God. If we take every small thing to heart, if we cannot forget past grudges, can our hearts be vast as the ocean?

The great land supports the myriad creatures. There is nothing that does not feel the warmth of the sun. But how narrow my heart, smaller than the chicken's roost or the pig's enclosure, empty but for ambition. How can it soar with the eagle or race with swift horses?

I pray God to open my heart. Only then can I find peace. May it be high as a mountain peak, deep as the sea - when, Lord, when?

I was not disobedient (Acts 26:19)

The great light still shines before me. The tender voice still calls as it did then. Love like a rope binds me at your altar. Whenever. I stray, Love pulls me back.

Over mountain ranges, Christ sought me. Following Christ now, what are rugged paths to me? Along a blood-spattered road, Christ sought me. Following Christ now, what are gain or loss, life or death to me?

My white-haired predecessors lead the way. We, the younger generation follow, - some ways behind - the baton passed, in our hands now. Can we be lax? Or waiver?

So many lambs are waiting to be fed. Lost lambs are waiting to be found. As shepherds, how can we not be anxious, burning with impatience?

Called in a vision - before that, tired, unable to move. Now, even if I had to crawl on my knees I could not bear to abandon the Christ who has called me. Called in a vision - before that I had become old, little life left in me. But now, watch me pluck up my spirits and run!

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translated by Janice Wickeri with Philip Wickeri

FAITH AND LIFE

23. My Experience in the Countryside – Liu Qingfen

It was in June, 1948, just before Liberation that this essay was written, at the request of two American missionary friends. I owed a great deal to Dr. Ran Sailer who encouraged me to write and helped to pass it to those American friends. It was necessarily confidential at that time, and Dr. Sailer kept one duplicated copy. Several years ago, before Dr. Sailer passed away, he wrote to me to ask whether this essay could be published as an example of one Christian's experience with revolutionary China prior to 1949. At first I hesitated over whether it was worthwhile, and unfortunately in the process of keeping correspondence and consultation, Dr. Sailer passed away. It was in November 1986, when Dr. Philip Wickeri visited Beijing, that he talked with me about this essay, and later on wrote to me enclosing a duplicated copy and encouraging me to publish it.

Though the time when I worked with the Communists from 1944 to 1946 was very short, yet the good and revolutionary tradition and style of the Communists impressed and educated me very deeply. It has been over thirty years since Liberation, and it is still this revolutionary spirit that is effective in the reconstruction and modernization of China. As a Chinese Christian, I thank God for He has guided us to march forward on the way of Three-Self on which we witness for the salvation of Jesus Christ. And we find that the spirit of Jesus Christ of self-denial, of loving and serving the people and of saving the world is not contradictory to the spirit of the revolutionary upright and principled people who struggle for the liberation and the happiness of the people. On the contrary, these two spirits are interlinked with each other and the source of both is God. This opens the way for us Chinese Christians not only to be taught and to accept the abundant grace and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also to learn from the true, the good and the beautiful in the society; and to practice earnestly what we advocate, to understand and do the will of God, and to be good witnesses for the Lord, to the glory of God our Father.

January 1987

In the summer of 1944 I was graduated from Peking University and returned to my home village in Northeast Hopei (Hebei). My prison experience was the direct cause of my return. For my parents and I intended to have me stay at home and teach in the primary school in order to hide for a little while. However, it was God's arrangement to make me meet with the following experiences.

At that time the Japanese were in a town about 5 miles from my village. In the surrounding country and smaller villages the Communists had been working rather secretly for several years before I went home. When I got home, at first I tried to avoid having any contact with them. But before the primary school opened they knew my name and came up to invite me to their middle school which would open in September, and after much urging I promised to go.

This school was in a village about ten miles from the Japanese-occupied city. Really it was started without any favorable condition at all; no teacher, no books, no equipment, not even any students. The Japanese often went into the country to destroy anything that was against them. So this school was in danger. But it got along even under these difficult conditions.

When the Japanese surrendered in 1945, the Communists moved the school to the town, and with it the teachers. From that time on the Nationalist army came and went several times until the conditions became so serious that I fled first to Tientsin (Tianjin) and later to Peiping (now Beijing). It was really God's guidance to have me come out again. Altogether I stayed there for two and a half years. During that time my spiritual life went down seriously, yet I got much knowledge and many challenges from the experiences.

The most challenging point is their sacrificial spirit. Many left their homes and relatives and went the way of sacrificing themselves in the war against the Japanese. Life was very hard under the control of the Japanese, who constantly made raids into the country trying to extinguish the Communist workers, who were driven from village to village and even were caught and killed. I found it was hard to witness as a Christian on this point, because I was not living such a life of sacrificing for Christ.

In that region one feels ashamed to talk about trying to get more money. The thing they measure is what work a man can do and how much he is serving the people. The political workers live a harder life than the teachers, setting a good example.

The second challenging point is their self-examination spirit. It is one of their constant practices to have self-examination and mutual checking. In these meetings all men are equal, no matter how high a position anyone has; a soldier may point out the mistakes of the commander, a student may point out the mistakes of his principal. Whoever speaks must speak in a positive and disciplined way. I remember that once I wrote a letter of criticism to the principal, who was a Communist leader. Later he talked with me very politely, accepted some of my ideas and explained his own to me very thoroughly. I was very much moved and educated.

In the Communist region, the higher the official, the more humble he becomes, for they take the spirit of accepting criticism humbly as one of the tests of their work. They really practice one of the basic virtues of Christianity.

In school, each class is divided into small groups of about seven to ten students which have regular meetings each week to have self-examination and mutual criticism. The teachers have the same kind of discipline too. Sometimes the whole school is called together to have public criticism and confession. Once I heard that a school even stopped all classes for a month to let the students criticize the school authorities. One of the students was so affected that he wept while he was speaking. That's the way the whole school is united.

The third challenging point is their good relationship with the poor and oppressed, who form more than 85% of the country people. The rich and controlling class hates the

Communists mostly for this reason. Certainly there were many bad men who accused the property owners through the Communist government in that area in order to get their wealth. Sometimes the torture of the landlords or rich men was horrible, yet it was in retaliation for the wrongs which the poor had suffered at their hands for many years. Very soon those who had used their Communist power were taken away and punished if they had used it wrongfully. I tell this because I feel that the stories told by the escaped landlords and rich men for the most part were unfair.

The Communist workers wear the same kind of clothes, eat the same kind of food, and speak the same kind of language as the country people. They understand the conditions of the people very clearly. The officials usually travel around. The higher the official, the more courteous he is toward the ordinary people. That's why they very quickly build a good relationship with the people. Here the democratic spirit is shown clearly. It seems to me that this kind of spirit, to identify themselves with the ordinary people, is extremely important for our ministers. Our church really has not accomplished much in taking root among the Chinese people.

The fourth point is their educational efficiency. In the country there are very few intellectuals. The intellectual level is thus very low and the condition is very unfavorable to develop education. But the Communists have tried hard to overcome these difficulties. The characteristics of their education are many:

1. They emphasize training in the philosophy of life. Students are led gradually to give up their traditional conceptions of living for self. Instead they are led to build a philosophy of service. The method they use is marvelous. Students are divided into small groups of seven to ten. They are encouraged to speak as freely as possible in the free discussions. Their ideas and ideals are changed more by this kind of free discussion than by lecturing. These discussions help the students to see the happiness and value of serving the community.

2. They emphasize meeting social needs. In the present Chinese situation they are giving a kind of short training rather than a regular education. They combine learning and working. In their schools, students have many contacts with the people and help them with their daily life. The students are also required to help with the harvests or other labor. In short, they try to combine head-work and hand-labor.

3. They emphasize the combination of theory and practice. They greatly despise theory divorced from practice. Also they avoid practice without the guidance of theory.

4. Their hard and sacrificial life has given a new light and contribution to China today. Their influence is so great that even a great many college students in the government region are very interested in studying their books, singing their songs, and practicing their drama.

5. Their democratic spirit. This might be a shock to you, for I have heard that many American friends say that there is no freedom and democracy in the Communist region. Let me tell you

a little about what I have seen there. The low officials collect the opinions and conditions of the people and report them to the high officials. Then the high officials hold meetings to make their decisions, which become their policy or order. These decisions are given back again to the low officials to discuss. In the discussions people are encouraged to speak freely. Sometimes the discussions lead to debate. Then all might be called together to debate in a large meeting. The debate sometimes lasts for more than a month. People are led naturally to the decision basically based on the original one. Individual minor differences are possible, to be held by a few people. But in announcement they only give out the decisions.

These are the things I wish to tell you. My conclusion is this: Compared with the truth and life in Christian faith, which comes from God directly, what the Communists are working at is not the highest and eternal. Yet they are like science, approaching truth from the bottom to the top. Hence on the practical side they give us Christians a great challenge. We need to accept their challenges, examine ourselves before God, and adopt some of their good practices. It seems to me that the basic doctrine of God's grace, accomplished and given to us through Jesus Christ, is the most important essence in Christianity, without which I might not have stayed and worked along with them.

In China today the corruption of the national government has made people lose their hope and has created an excellent chance for the Communists to develop. The civil war will help them to grow rapidly. Pity to say that many foreign Christian friends have not realized that the help from the American government has had bad influence rather than good, because it is apt to lengthen the war and torture the people more and more. So I hope that you pray for this more deeply, try your best to find out the mistakes on your own side, and try to help China in a constructive way.

June 1948

24. Women and Evangelism in the Chinese Church – Jiang Peifen

All Chinese citizens enjoy political equality and equal rights to education and employment. But for a long time, due to reactionary forces in society and to the influence of certain theological ideas, Chinese Christian women were not able to deal with the realities of life outside the Christian community. After New China was established, issues such as belief versus unbelief, the spiritual versus the material, this life versus the next, became all the more prominent, and ideas such as "believers cannot be yoked together with unbelievers," that the material world is evil, that human life has no value, etc., became current. The church had distanced itself from both the people and social reality, and thus its witness among the people was lost, increasing the obstacles to evangelism. Illumined by the Holy Spirit and taught by real life, we realized that Christ's incarnation was in itself an affirmation of human life and of the material world. For sin to be eliminated from the world, for the kingdom of heaven to be realized, Christians must "serve the Lord their God with their whole hearts, with their whole minds and with their whole strength," that is, with the whole of their lives, thus making a unified witness of faith and life. It is this which has led many today to come seeking this Christ in whom we believe.

**"The Lord gives the command; great is the host of women who bore the tidings"
(Psalms 68:11).**

In the past, women evangelists were not valued in the church and there were few women pastors in China. Today we follow the teachings of the Bible and the bonds of tradition have been broken. Now all women evangelists with theological training and long experience in pastoral work who enjoy the respect of believers, can be ordained following an assessment and recommendation by a church. Of the over three hundred ministers ordained nationwide in recent years, one-sixth have been women. They are busily engaged in the work of the church and some have been selected as senior pastors.

In addition to the over four thousand churches which have opened in the last few years, local meeting points have sprung up across the country, mostly in rural villages. Membership varies from ten to several thousand and the venues include homes, simple church buildings, and open air meetings. Most of these meeting points lack an officiating minister and are presided over by volunteers, many of whom are women. They may be retired workers, teachers, health professionals or housewives. There is a good number of younger women with junior or senior middle school level education among them. Through the week, these women attend to farm or household duties. On Sunday they preach or visit among the congregation, but they accept no donations. To compensate for their lack of Biblical knowledge, the church runs periodic lay training programs for them in each province and municipality. The course may last a year, a half year or just a few months and the women take turns attending them. Volunteers who have taken such courses progress rapidly in both knowledge and the spiritual life.

Younger volunteers with a certain level of education may also sit an exam for seminary in order to be even better prepared to do the church's work in the future. Impelled by love for

the Lord, these young sisters are willing to commit themselves to accept the Lord's call. At present, there are nine seminaries in China which foster the person's overall development: spiritual, moral and intellectual, as well as individual and corporate life. Here those who do the work of the church in New China may reach a deeper level of attainment. Of the five hundred students in seminaries at present, upwards of one-third are women. In addition to the entrance exam, they are selected on the basis of recommendations by local churches, faith commitment and moral behavior.

In recent years, our seminaries have produced over one hundred graduates. The majority, except the ten or so now teaching in seminaries, are working in local churches. The relationship between seminaries and the local church is quite close. Churches contribute financially to the seminaries and ministers frequently offer courses to the students. Members of local congregations donate their own time in enthusiastic service, while seminary students do field work in local churches each Sunday, directing the choir, preaching, receiving guests, making home visits, etc. The students enjoy the deep esteem of the congregations they serve.

About two-thirds of all lay Christians in China are women. They have come forward of their own accord to assist pastors everywhere, to see that the work of the church is done well. They work faithfully and honestly out of love for the church and some of them have been selected and commissioned to serve as deacons and elders. The tasks they undertake within the congregation vary. Some lead weekday prayer meetings, Bible studies, youth and women's groups, etc. Some serve as ushers for Sunday services or belong to small groups which see to church decoration, finances, cleaning or visitation. Their pious witness frequently moves other Christians to join in these tasks out of fervent love for God's church. Sister Huang Xuefen, over eighty-years old, deacon of Dongshan Church in Guangzhou, formed a women's Sunday prayer meeting on her own initiative, took on the leadership of the Bible study class, preaches occasionally in outlying suburbs, and frequently visits among the congregation. A cheerful servant of the Lord, she even writes religious materials.

Everywhere the Chinese churches have such church-loving, Christ-loving volunteers, each with her own particular gifts. All are pillars of the church, faithful stewards of the Lord. The church cannot do without them.

“... take thought for what is noble in the sight of all” (Rom.12:17).

In a society where each person is respected for his or her contribution to the people's cause, all may share in the people's praise and enjoy political equality, no matter what the differences in belief. Talented women in leadership positions in Christian circles frequently command prestige and respect in the larger society and nation as well.

The general-secretary of the YWCA in China, Ms. Cora Deng, one of the founders of the Three-Self Patriotic Committee and associate chairperson of the national Three-Self Committee, is also a member of the Standing Committee of the national Women's Federation and a delegate to the national Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress (CPPCC).

Ms. Phoebe Shi, vice-president of the China Christian Council, associate general-secretary of the national YWCA in China and general-secretary of the Shanghai YWCA, is also a delegate to the national CPPCC and the national Women's Federation, a member of the board of the International Exchange Association and on the Chinese committee for the International Year of Peace. She has also been extremely active in initiating public enrichment classes in Shanghai which have enjoyed wide popular response.

Ms. Kuo Siu May, professor of the Foreign Languages and Literatures Department of Nanjing University, and wife of Bishop K.H. Ting, is a delegate to the Jiangsu Provincial CPPCC and deputy chairperson of the Jiangsu Provincial Women's Federation. Though plagued by increasingly serious health problems, particularly since the Cultural Revolution, she continues an energetic schedule of work and research.

In the spirit of Christ's love, these women give their all to meet the human needs of others and are widely respected and admired because of it. Though there are few who command such prestige and respect, there are many Christian women across the nation who have been commended as advanced or outstanding workers and have received other awards for their role in society.

Since the Cultural Revolution, full-scale reconstruction has been underway. Christians have put aside the painful experiences of those years, and in Christ's love, out of a strong sense of responsibility and mission, have entered whole-heartedly into the work of meeting the needs of the nation. In addition to those mentioned above, many other outstanding examples come to mind. Ms. Deng Ruquan, general-secretary of the Tianjin YWCA, has been active in nurses' training and early education. Ms. Gan Liming, of Lianyungang, Jiangsu, has spent much of her ninety years in middle school education, winning the respect of both Christians and non-Christians. She is also extremely active in her local church. In the medical profession, there is Dr. Guan Qianxiu, gynecologist at the Baixia District Hospital in Nanjing whose concern for her patients goes beyond office hours and physical problems; and Ms. Li Xinchun of Wuxi, principal of the Wuxi School of Nursing, who even after retirement involved herself in nursing education, child care and homes for the elderly. Ms. Wang Juzhen, an engineer in Shanghai, has been commended for her work in producing China's first locally-made tungsten filament in 1953, and has continued to work for improvements in related technology.

If someone were to ask me how we survived the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, I would point to women such as these, old and young! They are strong witnesses to the risen Christ, the light and salt of our age.

"You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48).

In China we make no distinctions among professions as being "higher" or "lower." We are all odd-jobbers for the people. Christians in everyday life, in service jobs, are also witnesses for Christ. In Fuzhou, twenty-seven year old Ms. Chen Dongwen is head of work for the blind under the local welfare bureau, caring for twenty-nine retired blind workers without families to support them. Forty-one year old Ms. Xu Yingli, of the Huiyang County Hostel in Guangdong, does her best to treat guests as if they were family. Since retiring from her job in a local

hospital, Ms. Xiao Xiuchun, of Guiyang in Guizhou, has been assisting in neighborhood committee work with local families out of a deep concern for the future of the younger generation.

The examples of women who bear excellent witness to the gospel in so many ways by no means end here. Those who witness quietly in the home, among neighbors, in factories and schools ... these have led many to Christ. They are the glory of Christ. In ordinary jobs, they bear extraordinary witness.

In its thirty some years, the Chinese church has been seeking to know Christ, to know the mission God has entrusted to us. Evangelism is not merely a matter of words. "You are witnesses of these things." The word "you" here refers to everyone, to the whole church. We live in a time when people tirelessly seek the meaning of human life. Those mentioned above as advanced women were selected not by the churches, but by their workplaces. They partake in the work of the Holy Spirit, live by the will of God, and through their lively witness, allow others to see and come to Christ.

"Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," is our frequent prayer. Let us commit ourselves to working with the Holy Spirit and allow the love of Christ to show forth through us, so that the kingdom of heaven may draw nigh.

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25. As Thou Wilt — Peng Cui'an

I am a Class of 1982 student in Nanjing Theological Seminary, but I actually signed up for the seminary in 1981. Meeting obstructions from different quarters, I couldn't enter the seminary until the autumn of 1982. My relatives didn't approve of my studying in a seminary, though mine is a Christian family. They hoped that I could be a real Christian but in secret, so as to avoid getting into trouble.

All of my good friends disagreed with my decision to attend seminary. They felt very sorry for my giving up the good job I was holding, because it was a difficult one to obtain and everybody envied me for having got it. They especially felt how precious the job was, since due to my family background I had been deprived of the right to work during the so-called Cultural Revolution and had to struggle hard to earn a livelihood. They, of course, didn't understand the difference between dedication and getting a job. But I knew clearly in my heart. I couldn't have gotten this job without His special loving care. "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away." My heart was very calm, and there was nothing I couldn't leave behind.

I met with opposition from the leaders and colleagues in the institute where I worked. They thought that I hadn't taken things into careful consideration and reminded me that I must think of my career, my income, my social status in the future and other problems like these. They advised me to think things over before making up my mind. In order to persuade me to change my mind, they even went so far as to break the rules and promote me to be a regular worker.

I was really very much shocked by the disagreements voiced by my brothers and sisters in Christ. They also didn't agree to my studying in a seminary. They were afraid that I might lose my faith while gaining knowledge under those circumstances. I was puzzled, disturbed, and I hesitated about whether I should go!

My pastor, acknowledged as a good shepherd by the congregation, enlightened me by sharing with me his own personal experience. He taught me how to respond to God's love and how to know God's will and obey it. He taught me how to trust in God, to rely on Him, to be obedient to Him and to submit myself to Him. "It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose." When I read these words from Philippians, my heart was full of joy. How precious they were! It's my source of strength and it's like a bright lamp lighting my way forward in the dark. It seemed that everything suddenly cleared up before me. I realized that all these negative reactions were a spur to me instead. It drove me to see clearly, from a different angle, the road which I ought to take and to be fully prepared mentally and spiritually to face anything I might encounter in the future. I was no longer puzzled about what to do and hesitated no more about which way to go.

Looking back, I saw the loving God who has never held things up. He has his time to do everything. The following year, in 1982, all of these obstacles finally turned into a word of encouragement: "You must unswervingly take this road to the end." Of course, some

misgivings on their part had not been dispelled entirely so these became the content of their constant prayers for me later on. As you know, today our young generation can stand firmly on our feet. In addition to His caring concern and His constant guidance, we have the support of our brothers' and sisters' prayers in great earnest. From the point of view of time, I had lost a year, but from the point of view of experience, that year was a precious and valuable one.

I longed to study in the seminary. But at the beginning, my aim of study was a very narrow one, only for myself. By and by, my mind was opened to my local churches, the churches in China and the universal church. My secular education from elementary school to high school and the experiences of the ten-year Cultural Revolution made me feel ashamed to say the word "God." Whenever the words "God" and "devil" appeared before me, immediately what came into my mind was "superstition." In the latter part of the Cultural Revolution, I got to know some devoted brothers and sisters in Christ in a home meeting. When we got together, the hymns they sang, the biblical stories and the teaching of Jesus they told, not only reminded me of my golden childhood days spent in the church but also aroused me to seek for truth. I wouldn't want to say what others say. I wanted to make sure what I was seeking was truth and not superstition. So, I was desirous to have an opportunity to study the Bible systematically. I wanted to get more knowledge about the Bible so as to satisfy myself, but that was all I wanted to achieve at that time.

Since entering the seminary, my mind has broadened. I have come to realize that I must study for the church. Each time I return to my home on vacations, I see the needs in my local churches. I see they're short of workers in His field. I used to never imagine that someday I could stand in the pulpit to speak, for I am clumsy in expressing myself. Then I began to think of how to do it well. There are fourteen students from my province, Fujian, studying in the seminary. We realized that we are schoolmates, and before long we'll be fellow workers. In order to work together with one heart and one mind in the near future, we need to have a deeper understanding of each other and opportunities for fellowship now. So, we decided to have a fellowship meeting once a week. Apart from sharing with each other our own personal spiritual experiences, we try to tell biblical stories, using simple lively language, and we learn to preach the Gospel by turns. Then, we make criticisms, with loving concern, of course, of the content of the speakers' sermons, their voice, and their appearance, etc. In this manner, we feel we're starting our practice for the future work of our church, and find it very profitable. We are from different denominational backgrounds; Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, the "Little Flock" and what not. But we have a common desire: denominational differences must subside among us, the younger generation, and we ought to be one body growing up into Christ as the head.

Students from all over the country bring us news about their local churches. While sharing joys and sorrows together, we no longer think only of the churches in our own province, but concern ourselves with all the churches in China, and we realize that we are to build up our churches in accordance with the Biblical truth, but possessing our own characteristics. Then we can say we are making some contribution to the universal church. We feel the weight of the load falling on our shoulders. Last year, the Fujian Christian Council ordained twenty-three new pastors. Their average age is over sixty. Congregations long to have us take the place of our elderly pastors serving in the church. Shall we be equal

to our task? Can we do pastoral work well so that the flocks which have now found their fold will not go astray and be lost again? Can we leave, together with them, the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity? We see the needs in our churches and we ourselves see all the more the need to study harder.

Now, I pray to our Lord like the blind beggar in Jericho: "Lord, I want to see." I want nothing but seeing. I want to understand what God's will is, not only answering the Call like Isaiah: "I will go! Send me!" but also knowing clearly where God will send me and what God wants me to do.

Please pray with me: "Loving God, guide me to have a share in Your work. I am unworthy. But you have abundant love and grace. Strengthen me in my weakness and use me to extend your Kingdom. In Christ's name. Amen."

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26. To Be a Person with a Beautiful Spirit – Wang Zhu

My name is Wang Zhu, and I come from a family which has been Christian for five generations. My father and mother often told us children: "You should help others because our situation is better than most." They also said: "It would be difficult for anyone to live if human life were without the love, care and assistance we should give to one another." My auntie often said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." In this way, the seeds of love were sown in my heart from my childhood.

In 1969, my mother was branded a Rightist and sent down alone to live in a remote village in Zhuanghe County (in southern Liaoning Province in northeast China). My mother knew very well that it would be difficult to live by herself in the countryside, but she was determined that none of us would go with her. She thought this was for our own good.

That same year, I was named an "Outstanding Educated Youth" at the temporary job registry in nearby Jin County. It goes without saying that a young person with my class background would have to sacrifice a great deal to be so designated during those years of ultra-leftism. In the temporary job registry, I poured out my heart to all. I made meals, planted vegetables, carried water, worked the mill, fed the pigs - there was nothing I did not do. Sometimes there wasn't enough to eat, and so I went hungry without complaint, leaving my portion in the pot so that there would be more to go around. In the evenings when everyone else was asleep, I mended clothes, darned socks, repaired shoes and dried everyone's shoes in front of the fire. At night, I would go with other girls to the privy so that they would not be afraid. My mother thought that I would be happy if I would just do well in the temporary job registry. For this reason, she opposed my transferring to Zhuanghe to be with her. I asked her again and again to allow me to go to Zhuanghe. At last she told me what was in her heart: "I am ill, and the Lord may take me away at any time. If I pass away, I would be leaving you behind as an orphan in this place!" I disobeyed my mother's wishes and transferred from Jin County to Zhuanghe. When I came to her so unexpectedly, mother wept.

I was twenty-two years old when I settled down in Zhuanghe, and because I did the same heavy work as all the men in the labor force, they called me "tomboy." There were three "bigwig" families in the village that took a liking to me, and wanted me for a daughter-in-law. When I turned them down, they struggled savagely against my mother and, using the pretext that I had not drawn a clear line between us, they also struggled against me. Things got to the point where I was nearly abducted and forced into marriage. Late one evening, mother packed some clothes for me and tried to force me to leave. But how could I go and leave her behind? Later, an auntie wrote asking me to return to Dalian to look after her child. Mother asked me to look in on an uncle who had been sent down to Jin County on the way. There was a family named Cai in a village neighboring my uncle's, and they said that if I agreed to marry their son, they would have my mother's residency transferred from Zhuanghe to Jin County. The brigade leader also guaranteed that as a senior middle school graduate, I could be a teacher there. However, my in-laws didn't make good on their promise after the marriage. I worked as hard as I could at home and in the village, hoping that I could move them by showing what a good daughter-in-law I could be, but it was all to no avail. They

fettered me with their feudal code of ethics, on top of which they said I had to draw a clear line between myself and my mother. I was to set myself on being a noble wife and loving mother. They even hid my shoes so that I couldn't go to see my mother when she was ill. When I set out barefoot over ice and snow in the direction of Zhuanghe, the people of the village were greatly moved, and my in-laws could do nothing but return my shoes. After I had returned to my mother's side, they wrote her a threatening letter saying if she didn't send me back to them, they would come to Zhuanghe and hold a struggle meeting. Ridiculous things like this were too numerous to mention. But even in those times, I never lost heart, for I believed that my mother's problems would be straightened out. I went many times to the United Front Work Department in Dalian to try to clear up my mother's situation. The comrade who received me would say: "You are truly a good daughter, a young person who stands up for what is right. Trust the Party, your mother's problems will be resolved." After the Third Plenum, my mother's situation was set right, and she was restored to her teaching position.

In order to improve relations with my in-laws, I returned to the Cai family for the busy season. Grain was hard to come by at that time, and so it became the rule of our house that cereal grain be given only to male members of the family. I had to subsist on gourds and vegetables, and little by little my health declined. But I was an "educated youth" and I also needed food for the mind. Sometimes I would borrow the newspaper from our neighbors, the family of Brigade Leader Shi, but then my husband would fly into a rage. He would rebuke me saying, "Books and newspapers cannot replace food." He would even snatch the paper I was reading from my hands and tear it to shreds. Later, using my family's political problems as a pretext, he would curse and beat me.

Just as I was struggling along to the point of no return, the policy of allowing an extra year of study for senior middle school graduates was put into practice by the Party. My feelings of excitement when my parents sent my younger brother from Dalian especially to give me the newspaper which reported the new rules on the national entrance examinations must have been difficult for others to understand. As I ran along the ten kilometers of road to the commune, I couldn't keep myself from shouting, "The Party has not forgotten me! Lord, you have looked after your little lamb." When I reached the commune, however, they wouldn't allow me to register for the examination, because my in-laws had previously made a deal with the cadre in charge. But I pleaded with him to act in accordance with the Party's stated policy, and so he finally had to relent. My in-laws employed a number of cruel methods, making me work night and day to tire me out so that I wouldn't be able to prepare for the test.

As the time for the national university entrance examinations drew closer, I became ill. There was nothing for my parents to do but take me and my child back into the city and nurse me back to health. Although I had worked with a hoe for twelve years, I hadn't lost all my culture. The reason was that whenever my parents saw me, they would say: "You can't forget your studies; knowledge is power." It was also as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

During my many years in the countryside, middle school students would frequently ask me questions on different subjects about their homework. There was also a middle school teacher named Zhao and a teaching supervisor named Du whom I helped prepare lessons, make exercises and even write teaching plans over a longer period of time. In addition, there were some young people preparing for the worker-peasant-soldier university entrance exams that I helped with algebra, geometry, physics and chemistry. I not only tried to help them as best I could to raise their cultural level; I also gave them some of my books to study. Later, when I had to prepare for my own entrance exams, I had no books and so my parents borrowed some which they hand copied one by one all through the day and night so that I would have something to study with. Because I had helped others with their studies for some time, I did rather well on the entrance examinations. When I received notification of acceptance from my school and the government was to issue the travel permit I needed to leave, my in-laws were dumbstruck. Before I went to the Public Security Bureau to transfer my residency, my husband wanted me to go to the commune and sign a written pledge that I wouldn't divorce him after entering university. This was really insulting and so I didn't pay any attention. Six months later, my child's residency was also transferred to my mother's house in Dalian. This time, my in-laws became really unbearable. I was already studying in university and yet they repeatedly tried to hold me back. My classmates were very angry about this and they urged me to make a clean break with my husband's family. Yet I didn't do it. With the Bible in my hand I said that one should be forgiving, forgiving even seven-times-seventy times.

After I graduated and was given housing by my new work unit, I brought my husband to the city so that he could have a peaceful life there as well. In October, 1982, his right arm was broken from the shoulder blade to the wrist so that he could no longer take care of himself. I tried every way possible to get him well, using my own resources, borrowing money and patiently looking after him. The people in the countryside who had said categorically that I would divorce him and "fly away," were at first surprised at my behavior, and then said, "University students in the new society are enlightened and magnanimous." My husband is now a temporary worker at a military convalescent hospital where he makes decorative seals, cranes and other animals out of cement. Some of these have been filmed by a television studio, and he is making a contribution to the beautification of the environment. In 1985, I had my husband's residency transferred to the city according to government policy. When I returned to the countryside to make arrangements for his transfer, his relatives received me very warmly and couldn't stop praising me. Some said, "A movie should be made about a university student who marries a peasant; it would be a good form of propaganda."

It is true that there is a wide cultural gap between my husband and myself. Our hobbies, habits and even the things we talk about are so different. But we are a couple, and our household is a product of the times in which we have lived. Even though there have been problems which we once thought unresolvable, as members of the same household, we must face the situation, dare to be open, and change the situation so as to recreate our lives. I think that this is the attitude which everyone should have towards life. If family life is warm and harmonious, work and study can likewise be changed and improved. My husband happily says, "I will never in my whole life be able to repay the kindness you have shown me." He

now also understands me. For the past several years I have also been fulfilling my obligation to his mother, inviting her to Dalian, sending her money, bringing her bags of rice, flour or other foods, and in these ways trying to better her life. Whenever she meets friends or relatives from the village she is filled with talk about what a wonderful daughter-in-law she has and how lucky her son is. My brothers- and sisters-in-law also come and visit us often.

I often think: The family is an inseparable part of the larger family we call society. Improving family life is therefore a contribution to society. Because I have been through frustrating times in my own family, I should now show concern for others who have family difficulties. For example, there is a person in our work unit named Li married to someone named Dong who works for the Dalian port authority. They already have a child. Because the problems between them were so acute that even counseling couldn't resolve them, they decided to get a divorce. I heard about this unfortunate turn of events after returning to Dalian from a business trip, and so I resolved to save this unfortunate family and do what I could for society. Many times I gave up my rest time and contacted the individuals involved. Using my own case as an example, I spoke to them about family responsibilities, duty towards the child and one's parents, personal ethics, one's social contribution and so forth. Their two hearts finally came back together and they were reconciled. They again have a warm home life, and my efforts achieved the desired result. We still get together often. There was also the case of Xiao Wang in our work unit and Xiao Hao from Dalian's Bohai Restaurant who were so angry with one another that they wouldn't even meet. I resolved not to let this family fall apart, and worked patiently, sparing no pains, within our work unit and with Bohai Restaurant to change the couple's ideological attitude. I spoke not only with the two parties involved, but with their parents as well. Eventually, they were brought back together and are now living harmoniously.

I also try to deal sincerely with our neighbors, and when they are in difficulty, they come and talk with me. Last year there was a family of four named Ren who had housing problems and so I agreed to let them have one of our two rooms for two years. I had to stack up my own furniture and our room became very crowded. My husband complained that this was not very convenient but I said, "What is convenient for others is convenient for us." After a year of seeing us leave early and return late, the two older members of the Ren family decided on their own to ease our burden by preparing our meals. My husband was not only pleased, he even gave them our house key so that they could feel more at home. We are like one big family, and the Ren parents have happily said, "We had been so anxious over how we would manage these two years. We never thought that although we are a bit crowded, our hearts would be so much lighter that we don't even want to move out."

The Central Committee has called on the people to "respect knowledge." I also see that as the pace of the Four Modernizations begins to fly forward, one's own knowledge quite easily becomes dated. And so I have used my spare time to continue with my studies. As a result of my efforts, my picture was featured on the cover of a monthly journal devoted to study, with a poem calling me "the strong one." Many friends and colleagues congratulated me on this achievement. Because of the Party's nurture and my colleagues' help, I have been named an Outstanding Teacher by the Dalian Electrical Bureau for several years running. I have also been named an Outstanding Teacher by the City of Dalian and by Liaoning Province. In 1985

the Ministry of Electronic Industries named me an Advanced Worker, and awarded me a prize. All the honors return to our gracious Lord above, but I am willing to serve as light and salt for our Father in Heaven.

Mine is the work of an ordinary cadre, and very far from that which is required of me by Christ and by the people. The standard which we look up to and follow is the source of our strength. Each day we rely on our Lord's grace to give us the spiritual strength and life needed to bear witness to Him.

I resolve to give my all to building up "socialist spiritual and material civilization," and to be a patriotic and church- loving Chinese Christian, glorifying God and serving humankind.

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translated by Philip L. Wickeri

27. Lao She and Christianity – Shu Bo

The great Chinese author Lao She was among the earliest martyrs of the Cultural Revolution in Beijing. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of his death. It is with a deep sense of sorrow that I write this brief remembrance of him.

Lao She's works have long been among my favorite works of modern Chinese literature. Though I have read them several times, his *Four Generations Under One Roof* and the autobiographical novel *Beneath the Red Banner*, remain books I find it difficult to put down once begun and I reread them frequently. Once, while reading *Four Generations Under One Roof*, I was particularly struck by two points: the first was that Qi Ruixuan's father, Qi Tianyou, drowned himself because he could not bear the humiliation of the Japanese occupation. How did it happen that twenty years later - 24 August 1966 - Lao She himself died in the waters of Taiping Lake? What a striking coincidence! Second, speaking through the mouths of Qi Ruixuan and Ye Qiu, the author had such warm praise for the faithful elderly poet Qian Zhuangyin. They said he possessed the sacrificial spirit of Jesus Christ and that he was "a warrior who mounted the cross of his own volition." Guan Xiaohe, who betrayed the poet, was even compared to Judas. These passages started me thinking: Why did Lao She have such deep love for Jesus Christ? What was its source?

Later I read a memoir by Shu Yi in the magazine *Shou Huo*, called "Father's Last Two Days." In it he says:

The year my father was twenty-three, he published an open letter to students even younger than himself. In the letter he said, "Jesus took up one cross, but we must be ready to sacrifice ourselves by taking up two crosses: one, to destroy the old world; the other, to build the new." This must have been his first statement under the pen name "She Yu."

This illustrates that early in his youth, Lao She already held the noble ambition of dedicating himself to his country.

Lao She's (1899-1966) real name was Shu Qingchun. He was a native of Beijing. At nineteen, choosing another name as Chinese intellectuals frequently do, he styled himself She Yu. The name comes from the two individual characters which make up the character for his family name (Shu). Its meaning is to sacrifice oneself or to commit oneself to something (*she ji*). His choice of this name, which served him from boyhood through the youthful determination to commit his life to the country, through middle age when he praised the spirit of Christ in the novel mentioned above, until old age when he gave his life in Taiping Lake, is full proof that, throughout his life, Lao She's words and actions were one. He never failed to be open and aboveboard, to live a life "given up" for others.

But my question still stands: What was Lao She's relationship to Christianity?

Early one morning in mid-autumn, I went to the library of the Nanjing Theological Seminary to work on the book *Annals of Nanjing: Religion* which I was editing. Leafing through the seventh volume of the 1924 edition of the *Yearbook of Christianity in China*, I came across an article by one "Shu She Yu" entitled "A Brief Account of the Reconstruction of the Beijing Gangwa Market Church of the London Missionary Society (LMS), as the Gangwa Market Church of the Church of Christ in China." I was overjoyed. This was a name used by none other than our great writer Lao She, was it not?

In the "On the contributors," the editor writes of Shu She Yu: "A writer, age 26, native of Beijing. Baptized 1922. A member of the Beijing Gangwa Market Church of the Church of Christ in China, he has served as an educational inspector in the capitol, has taught at Nankai Middle School and has served as secretary of the Beijing area Service Corps. Presently teaching at the No. 1 Middle School of Beijing Teachers' College, he is also director of the Sunday School at the Gangwa Church." Comparing this to Lao She's biography, four points are certain:

(1) The first phrases, "writer, age 26, native of Beijing," show that the author of the "Brief Account" was indeed Lao She. Lao She's real name was Shu Qingchun, styled She Yu, b.1899 in Beijing. The introduction was written in 1924 when Lao She would have been 26, which exactly fits with the facts.

(2) There is a clear indication that Lao She was a Christian: he was "baptized in 1922" at the age of 24, when he joined the Beijing Gangwa Market Church of the Church of Christ in China.

(3) Not only was Lao She a Christian, he had responsibilities in the church. He had been director of the Sunday School, telling Bible stories to the children. He also wrote the "constitution" of the church, as described in the "Brief Account,": "In July, 1922, Shu She Yu, a member of this church, drafted its constitution which was recommended to the congregation."

(4) We have his proposals for improvements in the church and his views on religion. As he declared in the "Brief Account," "Chinese should run their own churches," implementing self-support and independence, and reverse the trend by which "westerners run the churches" which is at odds with Chinese national conditions.

These proposals, made sixty-three years ago, demonstrate that Lao She had a good measure of foresight and sagacity in matters of religion. He proposed that the reconstruction of the Beijing Gangwa Market Church, formerly of the London Missionary Society, should be viewed as reconstruction into a church run by Chinese, the Gangwa Market Church of the Church of Christ in China, putting into practice the idea of self-support and no longer relying on the LMS to come forward with donations. The progressive significance of this is clear.

The "Brief Account" cleared up my doubts. I knew that Lao She had been baptized a Christian in his youth and had had a close relationship with the church. In addition to the evidence of the materials presented above, there is also the letter the author had written to his

wife, Hu Jieqing, sixty-five years ago, where he says quite openly, "I am a Christian and a Manchu In her reply, Hu is even more straightforward, "It doesn't matter, there is freedom of religion." And the two happily sealed their relationship. As the eighty-two year old Hu Jieqing now recalls, throughout their marriage until his death in the autumn of 1966, a life together of over thirty years, Lao She was never bound by the outward forms of religion. It was Christ's spirit of goodness and sacrifice that he upheld. Those of us who research Lao She will find here valuable revelations for our own outlook on human life and for the formation and development of our creative thought.

The article described here is approximately 4500 characters long (in Chinese). Though the title says, "Brief Account," it is a detailed description of the process of the reconstruction of the Gangwa Market Church from a church under the LMS to one under the Church of Christ in China.

The article's value lies not only in its importance as a resource for the study of the history of Christianity in China, but for the light it sheds on the influence of Christianity on modern Chinese literature and on Lao She's life and thought as well. (There is another hint in the article about the influence of Christianity in modern Chinese literature: ". . . at the time, the church council appointed Yi Wensi, Su Wenyan, Xu Dishan and Bao Guanglin to the drafting committee" Xu Dishan is another well-known author.)

We can see from all this that Lao She's relationship with Christianity cannot be ignored. I hope my brief article will draw scholars' attention to the points raised here and lead to further study.

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translated by Janice Wickeri

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