II. THE CHRISTIANS OF CHINA GIVE TOGETHER

The following article about the church in China was published in People's China (English bi-weekly, Peking, China), issue of May 1, 1956. It was written by Dr. Y. T. Wu (Wu Tse-yung), Chairman of the Committee for the Realization of Self-administration of the Chinese Churches. Dr. Wu is a secretary of the National Committee Y. M. C. A.'s of China. He was born in 1903 and graduated from Customs College, Peking. From 1924 to 1926 and, again, from 1937 to 1938 he studied at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, New York. He is now an active and articulate leader in the "patriotic" movement within the Chinese Protestant Church. — Ed.

"In 1950, the very first year after the establishment of the People's Republic, forty Chinese Christians initiated the movement for a Chinese Christian Church that would be self-administering, self-supporting and autonomous in its propagation of the faith. Since then this movement has grown steadily from that two score to hundreds of thousands of supporters.

1954 was a particularly remarkable year in the history of the movement. In July of that year 62 denominational groups and church organizations sent delegates to a national conference in Peking.

The Central Message

The central message of that conference was the promotion of a closer fellowship among all church bodies and groups based on a common love for their country and on a common desire to achieve the goals of the movement. The conference itself marked an end of inter-denominational conflicts, and this message was carried to practically every congregation and Christian family. As a result many more churches and Christian groups joined the movement, while those who had already joined have become more enthusiastic. From July 1954 to the end of 1955 twenty-two new provincial and local committees of the movement were formed, making a total of 197. Forty-three of the original ones increased their membership.

Of course, all was not plain sailing. Just as we were stepping forward with confidence, a small clique came out in open opposition to the movement and tried to destroy this great fellowship of Christian love by saying that differences of creed forbade cooperation. This argument against participation in the movement, however, was quite groundless, for the national conference stood out most clearly for the principle of mutual respect for such differences. In the light of this situation, in February 1955, when the standing committee of the movement held its third session in Shanghai, it reaffirmed its determination to enlarge and strengthen this great fellowship by rallying all Christians with love and patience. This resolution was received with great enthusiasm among Christians throughout the country.

Later it came out that those who opposed the movement on the ground of differences in creed were the very persons who took part in various activities directed against the people under the cloak of religion. These people collaborated with unfriendly foreign governments and reactionaries, carried on espionage, broadcast rumours, and in general, tried to undermine the national effort for reconstruction and they used this pretext of differences in creed to undermine our Christian fellowship.

Since the discovery and exposure of these Judases our Christian fellowship has been established on a much wider scale and on a firmer basis.
This is reflected in the actual growth of the Church.

Growth of the Church

Since liberation, and especially from 1954 onwards, new church buildings have come into existence, and old ones have been renovated, in Shanghai and Hangchow, in Kiangsu, Chekiang, Shantung, Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Hupeh, Hunan, Honan, Shansi, Shensi, and elsewhere.

The Church is steadily growing, too, in spiritual stature. From 1954 to 1955 joint evangelistic meetings and retreats were held in Peking, Tientsin, Shenyang, Ningpo, Amoy, Pooshow, Changchun, Tsinan, Soochow, Canton and other cities. Many evangelistic gatherings were also held by individual denominations and churches. They were all enthusiastically attended. For instance, 600 to 700 people attended meetings in Shenyang where the Reverends Ting Yu-chang and Sun Han-shu preached. Some came regularly every evening from places twenty miles outside the city. Joint Christian celebrations have become more popular and have been more enthusiastically attended since liberation.

Summer and winter youth conferences were also held in cities where there are fairly large numbers of young Christians. These conferences showed the steady growth of the promising young generation of the Church. Through regular church activities and such conferences, the Gospel of Christ has brought forth abundant fruits. Many churches have increased their membership. During the last three years, in Chekiang Province, the membership of the Church of Christ in China has increased by 2,587, the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui has increased by 1,473, and the Baptist Church by 1,312.

The national organizations of various denominations have also made progress in their work. In June 1955, the House of Bishops of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui, for instance, consecrated three new bishops. In August 1955, the Seventh-Day Adventists held a national conference and established their own national committee.

New Workers

The theological seminaries of the Chinese Church are training new workers. Each year many young people apply for admission to these seminaries. Graduates of Nan-king Union Theological Seminary and Yenching Union Theological Seminary have been placed in suitable church positions and are doing well. Chinese theological scholars and seminary professors are beginning to undertake research in the Christian classics and in theology. With the steady progress of the movement, work in this field will receive increasing attention.

The publishing work of the Chinese Church made great progress in the past year. In 1955 the total output of the Christian Literature Society, the Association Press, the China Baptist Publications House and the Sunday School Union was 275,700 copies, an increase of 170 percent compared with 1954, and sales of Christian literature in 1955 also increased. The circulation of religious pictures and church calendars now runs into tens of thousands. A pocket Bible was issued in 1955 by the China Bible House. Two new periodicals appeared in 1955, En Yen ('ord of Grace) and Sheng Kung God's Holy Work). The former is a youth magazine and the latter the official organ of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui.
During the past year or so the YMCA and the YWCA have also done much valuable work in social service and greatly helped the promotion of Christian fellowship in China.

Church workers and church members have all become more nationally conscious. They have been very active in the various movements for socialist construction and also in the world peace movement.

Christians in Public Life

Incomplete reports for 1955 show that many church workers in twenty different provinces have regular study groups. In Peking, Tientsin, Soochow, Nanking and other cities, study groups have also been organized for church members. Church workers and church members both have a better understanding of national and international affairs. Church members everywhere participate in public welfare activities such as flood control, combating drought, first aid, protection of public granaries, repair of public highways, drainage of waterways, public-health campaigns, and various production campaigns. Most Christian farmers, handicraft workers, and those engaged in private industrial and commercial enterprises have willingly joined in the movement of socialist transformation; not a few amongst them have become model workers. When Bishop Robin Chen, Miss Cora Teng and myself, in our capacity as people’s deputies, went on an inspection tour to Shantung, we talked with several Christians in Chihou Village, Liaocheng County, and learnt that all the Christians in that village had joined cooperative farms. Mr. Chao Chun-yeh, a church member, has won public recognition and been elected a model worker every year from 1952 to 1954. He is also the chairman of the cooperative farm in that village.

Many Christians all over the country have been elected members of local, provincial and national People’s Congresses, as well as members of local, provincial and national Political Consultative Conferences. Twenty Christian workers attended the second session of the national Political Consultative Conference recently held in Peking as regular or co-opted members. Chinese Christians have more intimately identified themselves with the work of the whole nation.

Needless to say the Chinese Church has continued its endeavours in the world peace movement and to promote international friendship and cooperation. In February 1955, we issued a general call to all Christians in China to sign the Appeal to the Peoples of the World issued by the World Peace Council against the use of atomic weapons. In response to our call, Christians all over the country signed with enthusiasm.

Many Chinese Christians have had opportunities to attend various world conferences and to join Chinese delegations to foreign countries. Miss Yu Yi-fang and I attended the World Peace Conference at Helsinki; Miss Shih Ju-chang and I attended the Conference of Asian Countries held in New Delhi. The Chinese Church has also had the honour to entertain various foreign visitors to China, including a delegation of the British Society of Friends. Such contacts between Chinese Christians and those of other countries help to promote international understanding and friendship between peoples.

But I must add that alongside these many achievements we have also had failures and setbacks.
We have not given nearly enough advice and help to local organizations in carrying on their various activities to support the country and to promote the work of self-administration, self-support and propagation of the Gospel.

Our task is great, but we have not yet sufficiently mobilized all our available forces to carry it out.

In a word, though our movement has made great progress, we still lag far behind objective needs. We must do better.

The Witness of the Chinese Church

The importance of our movement can only be understood if one recalls the conditions in which Christianity grew in China.

Christianity was brought to us from foreign countries. To preach the Gospel is a Christian duty in itself. Many devout Christians abroad contributed to the propagation of the Gospel through their selfless activities and generous contributions. But unfortunately imperialism made use of Christian missions for political and economic aggression, making the Christian an accessory to colonial expansion. We need not deal at length with the use of imperialism made of Christianity for purposes of aggression in China, but let me just mention one of the latest instances: In the Christian Century, September 18, 1955, there is an editorial article entitled "Missions in the Cold War." Commenting on the release of American spies in China, the writer admits that "strong pressures have been brought on individual missionaries and mission boards to place their information at the disposal of our intelligence services."

The identification of missions with colonial aggression created a wide gap between the Chinese Church and the Chinese people; the control of the Chinese Church by the missions made it impossible for Chinese Christians to manifest the power of their love of the Lord and of the people. Under such circumstances, how could the Chinese Church bear witness to the power and glory of God?

Our experience during the last few years proves that the Chinese Church can and must free itself from its ties to missions and colonialism; that Chinese Christians can unite and build a Church of their own. Today God has opened a new and living way of self-administration, self-support and self-propagation, enabling us Christians to stand up and bear witness to the Lord before the Chinese people without shame. We believe that unprejudiced Christians in all countries will rejoice in the new birth of the Chinese Church.

The basic principle of this present movement is to enable Chinese Christians to take charge of their own Church. This does not mean that the Chinese Church is thereby to separate itself from spiritual fellowship with Christians in other countries. We oppose colonialism and invasion by colonizing countries, but not the people, nor the Christians of other countries. We believe in the unity of "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours." Christian believers in all countries are members of one body. Christ is the head of us all.

We respect the rich Christian heritage that has come down to us through the last two thousand years. But we also believe that a Chinese Church that is fully
self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating will enable Chinese Christians to be more loyal to Christ and to bear better witness to the Gospel of Christ.

Christians and Socialism

The Chinese people have chosen the way of socialism. The way of socialism is a way that will do away with exploitation, oppression and hate, a way of mutual cooperation, equality, fraternity, aiming at the welfare of all people. All these characteristics of socialism are in harmony with Christian principles. Throughout the past the majority of the people of China lived in misery because of exploitation and oppression under reactionary regimes; today we already see clearly a vision of the new China, prosperous and strong, marching forward on the highway of socialism. We are in the midst of our first Five-Year Plan. The whole nation welcomes the surging tide of socialist transformation and construction with joyous enthusiasm. Christian labourers, farmers, handicraft workers and capitalists, in common with the whole nation, are wholeheartedly taking part in this great movement. New China is producing more food and manufactured goods; the life of the people, particularly in the rural districts, is steadily improving. Why should we Christians refuse to support such a social system, or hark back to the old feudal and colonial system which is already dead?

The leading force in our socialist construction is the Chinese Communist Party. The world view of the Communist Party is different from ours, but the Communist Party is consistently and faithfully carrying out the policy of freedom of religion. The experience of the last few years proves that we Christians enjoy complete religious freedom in a country headed by the Communist Party. In these last six years we Christians have experienced a sense of peace and comfort in heart and mind. We consider that the liberation of China and socialist construction have clearly revealed the holy and loving purpose of God to the Chinese people.

In New China, we have a better opportunity to preach the Gospel of Christ. As Christians we are in a better position to discern what in ordinary life is good and pleasing to God. As a woman member of the church in Peking said: "In the past we heard much about love and righteousness inside the Church, but when we came out of Church, we saw everywhere cruelty, suffering and fear. Only now do we see things in keeping with what we preach—only now can we really practice what we believe." What we have experienced in New China makes us see that the view that Christians must necessarily oppose socialism and Communism is entirely unfounded.

Work for Peace

The question that concerns the world most today is that of peace. The existence of weapons of mass destruction threatens the lives of innumerable people and the future of civilization. Therefore, to work for peace is a lofty, noble task.

The people of China want peace and they want to cooperate with men of goodwill throughout the world in working for peace. When we say the Chinese people want peace, we bear witness to what we see and hear every day. For instance, during the first Five-Year Plan, our country is spending enormous sums on peaceful construction. It is a plan for the welfare of the people. If our government were not sincere in its efforts for peace, it would not launch into such a gigantic construction plan. To carry out such a plan requires a peaceful international environment.
We not only see the peaceful reconstruction of China and the desire of the Chinese for peace; we also see the growth of the peace movement throughout the world, and the growing support for the principles of peaceful co-existence. Can any Christian be deaf to the holy call of peace?

We frequently hear propaganda for war in the name of a crusade against Communism. In spite of the lessening of world tension there is still plenty of it, and many people are still influenced by it. This is a fact that deeply concerns us. Such anti-Communist propaganda completely distorts the facts. We see plainly that the nations, like China, which are the targets of such attacks, are working for peace and are engaged in extensive plans for peaceful reconstruction. Conversely, those nations which accuse others are exactly those which are working for war. Actions speak louder than words. We believe that as more and more of the facts become known, war propaganda will make less and less impact and will fail of its aim completely.

We believe that war is not inevitable, because no one wants to see another world war which would bring unimaginable suffering to humanity. People of all nations, regardless of race and colour, political opinion, social system and religious faith, should unite in this common cause for peace. We Chinese Christians wish to work hand in hand with Christians of all the world for the abolition of war and the establishment of a lasting peace.

Current Tasks

In the Chinese Church today denominational rivalry is replaced by closer fellowship and mutual respect. By free, frank and democratic consultation, giving full consideration to different opinions, we hope to strengthen our unity so as to work with a common mind and will, and to put "our house in order," overcoming the defects in organization left by the past.

Since the beginning of this present movement many of the Chinese Churches have become completely self-supporting through the free offerings of church members. Those which are still having financial difficulties will no doubt gradually become self-supporting as a result of the continual improvement of their congregations' economic conditions consequent upon the general rise in standards of living. We are planning by mutual aid fundamentally to solve the problem of self-support of the Chinese Church by 1957.

The main task of the Chinese Church is to preach the Gospel and to lead men to the Lord. We intend, therefore, to promote a deeper study of the truth of the Gospel which is the foundation of our Christian life. We shall organize various types of meetings, where, with due respect for denominational and theological differences, we shall exchange and share experience in studying and propagating the Gospel.

Christian publications in the past were mainly translations of foreign works. Since liberation the situation has changed. There is now an urgent demand for Christian literature. We should, therefore, do all we can to encourage Christians to write. We should help Christian publishers improve and co-ordinate their work. We should also help to co-ordinate the work of different Christian periodicals to eliminate duplication and waste of men and means. We should enrich the contents of these periodicals so as better to satisfy the needs of their readers. We shall start a new magazine which will meet the spiritual needs of church members and help the pastors in their work.
We shall undertake the translation of Christian classics and organize systematic research on theology and church history.

The harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few. This is the situation of the Chinese Church today. We therefore urge all members of the Christian community to play as full a part as possible in the work of the nation and the Church, and in the endeavours of all peoples to preserve world peace.

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