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From the Editor

Most of the content in this 30th issue of the *Chinese Theological Review* deals with interpretations of the path toward unity of the Chinese Protestant Church, primarily during the post-denominational era.

The call for unity began almost with foreign mission agencies' arrival in China and was a matter of discussion at the China Missionary Centenary Conference in Shanghai in 1907 to mark 100 years of Protestant missionary activity in the country. Not all foreign missionaries supported church independence and unity, but many did. The discussion then was missionary led, but efforts by Chinese Christians themselves to form their own union churches and independent churches grew and bore fruit in the ensuing decades, as did calls for further cooperation and merging among the denominations that had come from the West.

That history took a dramatic turn with the founding of the People's Republic. Christian mission organizations were expelled, funding was cut off and denominational structures no longer viable. The 1950s saw the merger of seminaries and Bible colleges and the dismantling of denominations and denominational consciousness. The closure and merger of churches took place throughout the 1950s and 60s. Steps toward a new church structure taken in the early to mid-fifties, were brought to a standstill during the Cultural Revolution.

In its aftermath, with the restoration of religious life and the reopening of churches in 1979, discussion began to coalesce around the need for a church identity in the context of Chinese society, to move from "three-self to three-well" and naturally from the founding of the China Christian

Council in 1980 as the “ecclesial expression” (K. H. Ting) of the two bodies (CCC&TSPM) to a church order and toward an ecclesiology for the Chinese Protestant Church, with a vision toward a united church.

Volume 30 begins with the most recent Church Order of Protestant Churches in China, passed in November 2018 at the Tenth National Chinese Christian Conference. There have been four iterations of the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China: 1991 Church Order for Trial Use (See Chinese Theological Review: 7 (1991): 21-30; 1996 Chinese Christian Church Order (See CTR: 12 , 63-79, 2008); Church Order of Protestant Churches in China (See CTR: 21(2008): 37-51 [reprinted in CTR: 27 (2015):59-74]; and this current version.

Much is new, more detailed and more clearly set out in this new version, which has 11 Chapters and 62 Articles, in contrast to its immediate successor with 8 Chapters and 38 Articles. Two major changes can be found at the beginning: “Article 2: The Chinese Church functions according to the principle of self-government, self-support and self-propagation (hereafter: three-self principle) which embraces independence and self-management, upholds the direction of Sinicization of Christianity, follows the path of patriotism and love of church, and the deepening of theological reconstruction, implementing the core values of socialism and actively adapting to socialist society,” and Article 3, which for the first time speaks of the Chinese Church very directly as a “uniting church, implementing the governing mode of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council (CCC&TSPM).” The three added Chapters are “Life of the Church,” “Charities,” and “Discipline.”

In his “On the Growth of a Chinese Ecclesiology for the Chinese Church,” Rev. Dr. Chen Yilu, vice-principal of NJUTS, notes that “In 1958, union worship was born of a situation in which there was really no alternative, because so many

ministers had been sent to take part in productive labor; clergy and church workers and believers had doubts about Three-Self and their faith. But this state of affairs became in the end a good thing. When denominational structures and functions collapsed, the church followed.” He goes on to explore the development of the vision of a united three-self church and union worship through the formulation of the church orders 1991-2018. He sees a blueprint, or a line of intention, in the thinking and efforts of church leaders, from the older generation (Y. T. Wu and others) to K. H. Ting and on, to develop and refine their ideas toward a unified church and an ecclesiology that would define it. He especially details the seminal roles played by Y. T. Wu and K. H. Ting. “If Mr. Y. T. Wu is the Moses of the Chinese Church, we can say Bishop K. H. Ting is its Joshua. He led the Chinese Church into a new era and became the leader of his generation in building up the Chinese Church. Under his leadership, the “Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks” were basically achieved, and in some respects, especially in ecclesiology and Theological Reconstruction, great progress was made.” The blueprint has settled (for now) in the lines set out in 2018, but it must be continually refined. Chen sees a future, no longer “uniting” but “united” Chinese Protestant Church, though he cannot predict how long the process may take.

Articles by two retired secular scholars whose area of research centers around the history of the Chinese Protestant Church follow. Prof. Duan Qi and Prof. Zhang Hua often present papers at conferences and symposia alongside Christian scholars and theologians. Together with Rev. Dr. Chen Yongtao of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, they presented their work in a symposium at the seminary: “In Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of Union Worship in the Chinese Protestant Church and the 20th Anniversary of Theological Reconstruction (纪念中国基督教联合礼拜六十年暨神学思想建设二十周年教师座谈会).

In her “The Church’s Decisions to Persevere in and Deepen Union Worship,” Prof. Zhang notes that “In 1958, union worship was made possible by the social and political situation, along with internal changes in the Church. In fact, most of the internal changes in the Church were also due to the social situation. Therefore, implementation of union worship came about mainly due to social influences.” One may dispute whether, given the history of Protestant efforts toward the outcome, social (and political) forces were the main cause. But they were surely an immediate and unavoidable impetus. Zhang gives a detailed account of the ways these forces affected the churches, which allows a fuller picture of how the resulting and ongoing work for unity on the part of Christians and the CCC&TSPM proceeded. Seeing the Church embedded in the broader sweep of the political history of the People’s Republic reveals the changes in the church’s situation caused by politics that led to further difficulties—fewer members and baptisms, attrition among clergy, collapse of structures—which in turn caused the church to further adapt to survive. Zhang also refers to the post-Cultural Revolution situation, when the Church worked to bring decentralized home gatherings and meeting points back into the TSPM fold. And she notes of the current situation: “Of course, new problems and trends facing union services now are also worthy of attention.”

Prof. Duan Qi’s “The Historical Path to Unity in Chinese Protestantism” was the keynote speech at the symposium. She too covers the basic details of how union worship came about but focuses on the church’s encounter with politics and adjustment to the new situation in the 1950s, giving a detailed look at the process of merging congregations and the difficulties, etc., involved. She shares many stories of Christians’ experience during the Cultural Revolution, collected or heard in the course of her studies over the years, as well as the difficulties of reconciling fractures

that opened among TSPM structures and those cut off but persevering during that time. Ms. Duan's essay as presented here is part 2 of a longer piece which deals with the church independence and unity movement beginning in the 1920s. I have included here the opening paragraphs from part 1, quotations from 3 theologians of the "older generation" for a view of their thinking on the path to a Chinese Christianity, its role in China and the Chinese Church vis à vis Christianity in the ecumenical world. She asks whether Chinese Protestantism can follow the same path to a united church as examples from the Church ecumenical and gives her reasons for believing it cannot.

Rev. Dr. Chen Yongtao's article, titled "Chinese Church Unity: History, Reality, Future," is based on his oral response to Ms. Duan's essay. He is a Christian theologian as well as a scholar, and he brings his theological insight to bear on the historical record presented and elucidated by both Ms. Zhang and Ms. Duan, as one who "stand[s] in present reality and look[s] to the future, gazing at the image of a united Chinese Protestant Church, and working hard for it."

"There is no denying that there are political factors and even political pressure behind union worship," he writes, "but political pressure is not the only factor. What's more, the Bible also tells us that secular power sometimes becomes a tool for God to accomplish his will. ...From the perspective of the history of the Chinese Protestant Church and the development of Chinese Christianity following reform and opening up, it would not be going too far to regard the union worship of 1958 as the blessing of God for the Chinese Church." Like Chen Yilu, he emphasizes the importance of creating an ecclesiology for the Chinese Protestant Church and sounds the note of the Chinese conception of harmony, echoing those theologians of the older generation quoted by Duan Qi. "This understanding of the harmony of the universe also reminds us that the unity of the church in China should

be the unity of diversity. Different concepts, different understandings, or even differences in belief practice are exactly the way to achieve harmony, not an excuse for church division.”

In his essay, “Reviewing K. H. Ting’s Historical Mission: Theological Reconstruction,” Rev. Dr. Wen Ge’s purpose is to review K. H. Ting’s writings on Theological Reconstruction to illustrate how the Bishop combined a realistic outlook in tune with his times with his contextual theological heritage. He finds that Bishop Ting’s own turn toward theological realism took place during the mid-1930’s while he was studying theology; hearing Y. T. Wu speak caused him to broaden his outlook from the “Thirty-Nine Articles” to the social reality of China at the time. This led him away from idealism to explore the ability of the Church to witness to the kingdom of God in different times, and as a social and political reality itself that can, “while preserving its spiritual transcendence, coordinate with socialism in building an ideal society of fraternity and justice.” Wen Ge sees this as the starting point for K. H. Ting’s promotion of Theological Reconstruction. Further, “facing history squarely can deepen and broaden the scope of theological thinking.” In Y. T. Wu’s words, the coming of the Kingdom of God was a hope beyond history, but that hope should not make Christians disregard their tasks within history. One could be true to the faith and at the same time involved in the world, thus, “loving the country and loving Christianity.” Wen traces the evolution of K. H. Ting’s views on Theological Reconstruction in detail and the influences that helped shape them, concluding that K. H. Ting saw the construction of an indigenous Chinese Christianity as the ultimate purpose of Theological Reconstruction, and realizing the mission of the Sinicization of Christianity as the historical responsibility of the Church in China.

In the final essay in this 30th volume of the *Chinese Theological Review*, Ms. Meng Yanling begins “An Approach to Biblical Exegesis for Women Evangelicals: The Story of Dinah in Genesis 34” with a discussion of Western feminist theologians and continues by using their methods for a feminist reading of the story of Dinah, seeking to restore the silenced voice of Dinah to her own story. She goes on to juxtapose a focus on Dinah with more traditional male-centered approaches used by mainly Western male scholars in biblical exegesis. Then she uses some Chinese cultural references to familiarize a feminist approach. In the same way that Dinah was both silenced and blamed for the history that swirled about her story, famous Chinese women in history have been seen as guilty of the excesses and errors of the men who in fact made victims of them. One example is the famous beauty Yang Guifei, a “femme fatale,” who was thought to have caused the An-Shi Rebellion (755-763), sending the Tang dynasty into decline, just as Dinah was blamed for the massacre in her story.

Meng Yanling uses Hebrew words in some of her discussion, which unfortunately I have not been able to reproduce in the text.

With this 30th issue of the journal, I am leaving my roles as editor and translator. With a few unavoidable exceptions, the *Chinese Theological Review* has been published annually since 1985. The late Bishop K. H. Ting asked me personally to select, translate and edit the CTR. This was facilitated by the support of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia. Future issues will be prepared in Nanjing, with continuing Foundation support, and I wish the new editor and her staff all success in their endeavors. It has

been my great honor as editor to translate and communicate with the authors whose work has graced these pages.

The *Chinese Theological Review* is a publication of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia. As always, I am grateful to the Foundation and to Dr. H. S. Wilson, executive director, for their support over the years. I would also like to acknowledge Rev. Prof. Philip L. Wickeri for his ongoing counsel and encouragement. For preparation of the current issue, I am grateful to Dr. Ruiwen Chen of the HKSKH Archives for her invaluable translation advice.

This journal is available online at <https://www.amityfoundation.org/eng/publications>; new issues are available shortly after publication. For print issues, contact the new editor.

Janice Wickeri

Hong Kong

Church Order of Protestant Churches in China 2018*

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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

Article 2: The Chinese Church functions according to the principle of self-government, self-support and self-propagation (hereafter: three-self principle) which embraces independence and self-management, upholds the direction of Sinicization of Christianity, follows the path of patriotism and love of church, and the deepening of theological reconstruction, implementing the core values of socialism and actively adapting to socialist society.

Article 3: The Chinese Church is a uniting church, implementing the governing mode of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council (hereafter: CCC&TSPM).

* Adopted November 2018 at the Joint (National) Conference of the Seventh Standing Committee of the China Christian Council and the Ninth Standing Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China.

Article 4: The responsibilities of the CCC&TSPM vis à vis the CCC&TSPM organizations in the various provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities include service, guidance, regulation and supervision.

Local CCC&TSPM organizations, churches and meeting points have a duty to observe this Order.

Article 5: The various CCC&TSPM organizations at the provincial, autonomous region and municipality level may draft their own corresponding orders based on this one and integrated with the realities of their locale. However, these orders may not contradict this Order, nor may they be formulated in the name of any denomination.

CHAPTER TWO: FAITH

Article 6: The Chinese Church takes the Bible, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed as the foundation of our faith, with reference to the principles of faith of the Church ecumenical.

We believe that:

God is a Triune God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are three persons, and also one body, all held in honor and glory. God is everlasting and eternal. God creates in love, keeping and caring for the whole world and all creation.

God is an almighty God, loving, just, holy and trustworthy, the source of all truth, goodness and beauty.

Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, born of the Holy Spirit. He came into the world to save humankind. He is the Word made flesh, fully God and fully human, to witness to the Father by preaching the gospel; he was crucified on the cross, buried, rose again and ascended into heaven. He will come again to judge the world, "to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth," but no one knows the day of his coming, only

the Father knows. Any statement declaring that Christ has already returned, or predicting a concrete date of his return, violates biblical teaching.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the giver of life, who enables people to know their sinfulness and to repent, leading us to know God and to enter into the truth, to unite with Christ. The Spirit bestows wisdom and ability and every grace, in order to together build up the Body of Christ, to live out the example of Christ. No one can make their personal spiritual experience into an absolute standard; any false claim of revelation from the Holy Spirit, any false prophesy, any speech or action based on a false interpretation of the Bible: none of these are from the Holy Spirit.

Human beings are made in the image of God but cannot become gods.

God has given humanity dominion over all God's creation. Human beings have a duty to care for the natural environment.

Human beings are sinful, diminishing God's glory, yet because of Jesus Christ, through faith, relying on his grace their sins are forgiven, they are redeemed and saved, they will be resurrected, and have life everlasting.

Faith and works should be one, Christians must live out Christ, glorifying God and benefitting people.

The church is the Body of Christ and Christ is its Head. The church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The church is called by God, a fellowship formed of those who believe in Jesus Christ. It was established by the apostles as Jesus instructed them. The mission of the church is to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments, to teach and nurture believers, to serve people and to bear witness to the Lord. The church is both universal and particular.

The Bible has been revealed by God and written down by human beings through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the highest authority in matters of faith, and

the standard of life for believers. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, people in different times and places all can gain new light from the Bible. The Bible should be interpreted in accordance with the principle of rightly interpreting the word of truth. It should not be interpreted arbitrarily or out of context. Anyone who holds personal authority above that of the Bible is wrong.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CHURCH

Article 7: Because of differences in culture, history and social context, churches throughout the world have developed diverse theological interpretations and faith practices.

Article 8: In its life of fellowship with the Church ecumenical, the Chinese Church is connected with Saints of the Church in every place, as mutual limbs [of the body of Christ], in friendly contact, mutual sharing and mutual respect. At the same time, the Chinese Church is an independent and self-run church, without a subordinate relation to any church beyond its borders, nor dominated by any outside church.

Article 9: The Chinese Church must build itself up in love, one in Christ.

Article 10: The Chinese Church carries out a CCC&TSPM mode of governance. Local CCC&TSPM organizations should voluntarily observe this Order, carry out all aspects of their ministry well with one heart and one mind, support theological education, actively develop social service and promote the development of social harmony.

Article 11: The Chinese Church maintains a unified form of worship. All churches must, in matters of faith traditions and practices, seek the common ground, practice mutual respect and mutual acceptance, making no distinctions or attacks. The teachings of the Bible must be observed, and every effort made to preserve the unity of heart received from the Holy Spirit, striving to “become completely one.”

Any attempt to split the church violates the Lord’s teaching.

Article 12: The church is both a spiritual fellowship of Christians and a social group. The Chinese Church should build up the Body of Christ according to biblical teachings, carry out the duty of registration according to the law, conscientiously abiding by the national Constitution, laws, regulations and policies, and managing the church according to the law.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Article 13: The life of the church includes the sacraments, worship gatherings, meetings and fellowship.

Article 14: Based on the teachings of the Bible and church tradition, the Chinese Church administers two sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist.

The life of the church also encompasses other orders of worship, such as ordination, weddings and funerals.

The sacraments must be performed according to relevant liturgical regulations, piously and solemnly.

Baptism is commanded by the Lord Jesus as a sign that the one baptized has died with the Lord, been buried and has risen again. The Chinese Church recognizes the efficacy

of baptism both by sprinkling and by immersion, because the Holy Spirit works in baptism, creating a new person.

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

Only baptized Christians may receive the Eucharist.

Article 15: The Eucharist must be administered by ordained clergy. No one who does not have ministerial orders may be appointed to administer the Eucharist.

Article 16: The church may arrange for elderly or seriously ill Christians to receive the Eucharist in an appropriate place.

Article 17: Worship is an important component of church life, as well as of the spiritual life of a Christian. In worship, Christians are connected through the Holy Spirit with the Head, who is Christ, and become one with the Church ecumenical. The basic parts of worship include hymns, Bible readings, a sermon, prayers, blessings and offerings.

The liturgy is the concrete expression of worship, which includes the reasonable arrangement of the order of worship, choice of vestments and accessories, the arrangement of the altar and choice of sacred music. The goal is to give expression to faith in God, to meet the spiritual needs of Christians, to increase the sense of the sacred and solemnity and enhance the unity of the church.

The Chinese Church should, in line with its own context and conditions, on the premise of respect for basic faith and ecumenical church traditions, integrate the fine traditions of Chinese culture, develop appropriate liturgical forms for worship, the sacraments and other rites; these should be both sincere and aesthetically suitable, avoiding vulgarity and superstition.

Article 18: Through ordination into ministry, the Chinese Church continues the mission of Jesus on earth and inherits apostolic authority.

The rite of ordination to ministry must be held openly in a church. Ordination may not be received in private.

Ordination to ministerial orders should follow the relevant provisions of the “Licensing Criteria for Chinese Protestant Christian Clergy.” At least three bishops are required to take part in the laying on of hands for the consecration of a bishop. Ordained ministers of good moral standing and reputation may be invited to join in the laying on of hands. Ordination to the pastoral ministry requires joint laying on of hands by at least three ministers. Ordination of elders requires joint laying on of hands by at least three ordained persons.

The administration of the sacrament requires an ordained minister.

Article 19: Any vestments worn by ordained persons taking part in the sacrament should reflect a spirit of unity. Ordained persons taking part in the sacrament should wear vestments appropriate to their status.

Those who are not ordained may not wear a stole.

Article 20: Marriage is established by God. For weddings performed in a church, at least one of the couple must be a Christian; moreover they must have obtained

a legal marriage registration certificate. The marriage ceremony must be administered by a member of the clergy. Procedures should follow the liturgical conventions of the local church. The pastor administering the marriage should provide marriage counseling.

Article 21: The church may hold a farewell ceremony and memorial service for deceased Christians. A funeral must observe the relevant laws and regulations. Economy in funeral affairs should be promoted and public order and customary practices should not be violated.

Article 22: Christmas and Easter are Christian festivals that have been widely celebrated in the Chinese Church following the implementation of united worship. Additionally, activities for other Christian festivals may be held as needed. Local churches may not use such activities to return to denominational traditions, because this damages the unity of the church.

Article 23: To enrich the life of the church, drawing on Chinese cultural tradition, the Chinese Church may hold church activities on some traditional or legal holidays.

CHAPTER FIVE: CHRISTIANS

Article 24: Those who begin to come to church seeking the gospel truth and participating in church activities are called enquirers. Those who come to church or home worship gatherings for the first time seeking the gospel truth are called inquirers. Inquirers who have attended churches or home worship gatherings for a given period (usually not less than one year), who voluntarily accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, who repent of their sins, whose actions are upright, and who are law-abiding, may

enroll in an inquirers' class and make a systematic study of biblical teachings and what it means to be a Christian. Those who have been examined by a pastor on faith and morals and found acceptable, may be baptized. Following baptism, inquirers may be entered in the rolls of the church and become members.

Article 25: Christians must abide by the teachings of the Bible and observe the order and regulations of the church, show respect for the clergy, serve gladly, support all aspects of the church's ministry and fulfill their responsibilities to the church. Christians should love one another and help each other.

Article 26: Christians should be good citizens. They should love the country and love the church, conscientiously fulfill their social responsibilities, be law-abiding, and be in harmony with their families and neighbors, serve society and benefit the people.

CHAPTER SIX: MINISTERIAL ORDERS

Article 27: Ministerial orders in current use in the Chinese Church are: bishop, minister, elders.

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

Gender equality applies in ministerial orders.

Article 28: Those seeking ordination must meet the following criteria:

Bishops must have a formal full-time M.A. or above in theology (obtained from a theological seminary in China or overseas recognized by the CCC&TSPM), must be over 40 years of age, have served as pastor for over ten years, be profoundly versed in theology, have authored instructional

theses or works, have rich pastoral experience, the ability to unite co-workers and believers, a lofty moral character and be deeply loved and respected by believers.

At the time of consecration, a bishop should not be over 65 years of age.

Ministers should have formal full-time theological education (obtained at a theological seminary in China or overseas recognized by the CCC&TSPM). Those with an undergraduate theological degree (4 years) or higher should have over two years' pastoral work experience. Those with a diploma in theology (3 years), must have over four years' pastoral work experience.

At the time of ordination, a minister should not be over 60 years of age.

Elders should be high school graduates (including the equivalent of a high school education) or higher-level graduates, with ten or more years' experience in church service and a definite gift for preaching. They should have some theological education or one or more years in a course of training held by the provincial, autonomous region or municipality level CCC&TSPM.

At the time of ordination, an elder should not be over 60 years of age.

Article 29: The duties of the various ministerial orders differ:

A bishop's responsibilities lie mainly in interpretation of Christian doctrine, regulating the work of ministry, guidance, a great responsibility in pastoral care for the spiritual lives of ministers and believers. A bishop does not have any special administrative authority.

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

An elder assists the pastor in his/her work. An elder's professional duties are limited to the church and its associated meeting points, to pastoral care and guidance of believers, and administration of the sacraments at the request of the pastor.

Article 30: Ordination procedure for ministerial orders:

Candidates for bishop are nominated by the national CCC&TSPM executive committee. The candidate's own views should be sought following nomination, and the views of the CCC&TSPM organization in which the candidate serves should also be conscientiously heard, following which the Joint Standing Committees of the CCC&TSPM must elect the candidate by a two-thirds majority vote.

Applicants for ordination to the ministry must apply in writing, be put forward by the church council of his/her church, recommended by the management organization of the local church, with public notice of the candidacy published in his/her local church for two weeks prior to ordination. He/she must be approved by the city (locality, prefecture or league) CCC&TSPM of the district in which the church is located, which then reports to the provincial (autonomous region or municipality) CCC&TSPM. The provincial (autonomous region or municipality) organizations should canvass a wide range of views and carry out its own review. When the candidate has passed this review, the provincial (autonomous region or municipality) CCC&TSPM selects three pastors to form an ordination team to administer ordination.

A pastor (or assistant pastor) who has been ordained more than a year and meets the requirements for ordaining a pastor, shall perform the ordination according to corresponding procedures.

Applicants for ordination as elders must make a written application, be nominated by the management organization

of their church or meeting point, an announcement posted in the church or home gathering for two weeks, recommended by the church affairs organization of the local church and approved by the city (locality, prefecture or league) CCC&TSPM in which their church is located, which then reports to the provincial (autonomous region or municipality) level CCC&TSPM, which may then request the city (locality, prefecture or league) CCC&TSPM to send an ordination team of three or more pastors and elders to perform the ordination.

Elders who have not been ordained in accordance with the requirements of this regulation shall not be licensed as clergy.

Article 31: In addition to those ordained to ministerial orders, the clergy also includes Teachers and Evangelists. Seminary graduates who have not yet been ordained are called Teachers; Evangelists include deacons and lay preachers who have been involved in preaching.

Pastoral staff should be licensed according to the requirements of the Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian Clergy and entered in the records of the corresponding government religious affairs department.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT (CHURCHES AND MEETING POINTS)

Article 32: In the matter of the organization and management of churches and meeting points, the CCC&TSPM are responsible to assist the government in carrying out national laws, regulations, rules and policies and are duty bound to safeguard the lawful rights and interests of churches, home gatherings and Christians.

Article 33: Churches and meeting points are duty bound to observe the church order, constitutions and regulations formulated by the CCC&TSPM.

Article 34: The following conditions must be present for the establishment of a church or meeting point:

A requisite number of believers; a need for regular church activities; pastoral staff to administer church activities; a management organization (or a preparatory management organization) and a church order; a recognized source of funding.

Article 35: The establishment of the church or meeting point must meet the provisions of the Regulations on Religious Affairs, and go through the relevant examination, approval and registration procedures.

Article 36: The CCC&TSPM undertakes administrative guidance of temporary sites according to the relevant regulations of the “Measures for the Administration of Approval for Temporary Places for Religious Activities.”

Article 37: Churches and meeting points that meet these requirements shall install a senior pastor and shall undertake registration and recording according to the Measures for Recording the Main Persons in Charge at Temporary Places for Religious Activities. The senior pastor presides over the work of the church, pastoral care for believers, leads believers in resisting heresy and infiltration, publicizes and implements all decisions of the CCC&TSPM.

Article 38: Lawfully established churches and home gatherings which qualify as legal entities may apply to register as a legal person and obtain qualification as a legal person. With the approval of the CCC&TSPM in their locality,

they may report to the relevant departments of the local people's government at the county level for examination and approval and go through the relevant formalities with the Civil Affairs Department.

Article 39: Establishment of church and meeting point management organizations.

A church shall establish a church management organization (comprised of at least 7 persons). A meeting point shall establish a church management team (comprised of at least 3 persons). A church management organization consists of the senior pastor, pastoral staff and the requisite number of representatives from the congregation, elected by a meeting of delegates from the congregation or through consultation. The period of service shall be three to five years. Re-election and continued service are allowed, in principle not to exceed two terms. The church or meeting point management organizations should follow the principle of avoiding family members. The church or meeting point management organizations shall fully develop democracy, listen widely to the views of the congregation, proceed by division of labor and cooperation, and govern the church well with one heart and mind.

The age of members of the church or meeting point management organization should generally not exceed 70 years of age.

Article 40: The local CCC&TSPM shall guide and supervise all aspects of the ministry of a church or meeting point. The church or meeting point management organization must conscientiously and thoroughly implement decisions taken by the CCC&TSPM.

The church or meeting point management organization shall manage the ministry of the church, including:

Determining who among the pastoral staff licensed by the CCC&TSPM shall serve as preachers.

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

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

Keeping a roll of Christians, properly organized, to preserve church and meeting point information and archives.

Sound and healthy church and meeting point management involves a system of regular meetings, a meeting structure, and a system for retirement of pastoral staff, etc.

Resolutions must be passed by a simple majority of the organization's members. Decisions on important issues (such as large outlays of funds, recommending candidates for ministerial orders, etc.) must be passed by a two-thirds majority vote.

Retired clergy who enjoy good health may be invited to preach in the church or meeting point, if there is need and they are willing to do so. However, they cannot be in charge of the service.

Article 41: Full-time pastoral staff and workers employed by the church must sign a formal contract as stipulated by the Labor Law and should be provided with social insurance according to relevant regulations.

Article 42: The church should implement the national unified financial assets accounting system, establish and improve financial management, equip necessary financial accounting personnel, and strengthen financial management.

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

Management organizations at churches and meeting points shall regularly report revenue and expenditure and accept oversight from the local CCC&TSPM. When necessary, the local CCC&TSPM may examine the accounts or request the relevant government department to conduct an audit. A strict system of financial examination and approval shall be formulated. Large expenditures should be discussed and decided collectively by the church and meeting point management organization.

Article 43: Property and business management for management organizations of churches and meeting points. The church property belongs to the church, which shall be kept by the church management organization, and shall be in the charge of a designated person or team with a feasible and practical management system in place. Houses and buildings used for meetings, and residences for clergy shall not be transferred, mortgaged, used as investment properties or given to others.

No organization or individual may misappropriate, privately divide, damage or illegally seal up, detain, freeze, confiscate or dispose of the lawful property of the church, or damage church property and cultural relics used by them.

Doing our general work well includes management and upkeep of property, utilities and security.

Article 44: As a non-profit organization, churches and meeting points may accept donations in accordance with laws and regulations and traditional Christian doctrine. Donations collected shall be used for relevant church ministries and public welfare charities. Donations shall not be forced, apportioned or allocated. Donations from outside China with additional conditions attached shall not be accepted.

Article 45: Churches and meeting points shall go through tax registration and tax declaration according to law and enjoy preferential tax policies in accordance with relevant state regulations.

Article 46: Churches and meeting points shall uphold the principle of independence and self-government and resist all harmful outside interference of any sort.

Article 47: In using the Internet and other media for network activities, churches and meeting points must comply with the provisions of the Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China, the Regulation on Religious Affairs and relevant laws, regulations, rules and documents.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SEMINARIES AND BIBLE COLLEGES

ARTICLE 48: Seminaries and Bible colleges shall be jointly or separately established by the CCC&TSPM or provincial (autonomous region, municipality) CCC&TSPM and set up in accordance with the relevant CCC&TSPM relevant regulations.

Article 49: An authorized seminary or Bible college may apply for registration as a legal person in accordance with the relevant provisions.

Article 50: A seminary or Bible college shall formulate a charter and a corresponding regulatory framework. Seminaries and Bible colleges meeting these conditions shall establish a Board of Directors.

Article 51: Seminaries and Bible colleges shall implement the Measures for the Awarding of Diplomas in Religious Schools (for Trial Use), Measures for Qualification, Accreditation and Appointment of Teachers in Religious Schools (for Trial Use) and their supporting provisions, and carry out teaching activities in accordance with the curriculum set up by the Theological Education Commission of the CCC&TSPM.

Article 52: Seminaries and Bible colleges can accept voluntary contributions and other legal donations according to the regulations.

CHAPTER NINE: CHARITIES

Article 53: The CCC&TSPM, seminaries and Bible colleges, churches and meeting points and pastors can carry out charitable activities in accordance with relevant laws and regulations such as the Charities Law and the Regulations on Religious Affairs.

Article 54: The CCC&TSPM and churches and meeting points with the necessary qualifications may establish public welfare foundations or social organizations to carry out public welfare and charitable activities according to the law.

CHAPTER TEN: DISCIPLINE

Article 55: Should any of the following situations arise in the CCC&TSPM, churches and meeting points or seminaries and (Bible) colleges, the main persons in charge shall be warned and their ordination and related duties shall be suspended or revoked depending on the seriousness of the circumstances.

- (1) Failing to report major accidents and events in a timely manner, resulting in serious consequences;
- (2) Violating the principle of independence and self-management;
- (3) Failing to observe regulations in accepting donations at home and abroad;
- (4) Violation of financial and tax regulations;
- (5) Illegally holding or hosting large-scale gatherings;
- (6) Organizing citizens to leave the country without authorization to attend special religious meetings, conferences and training;
- (7) Endangering national and public security, undermining national unity, splitism and terrorist activities, infringing upon citizens' personal rights and democratic rights, hindering social management order, infringing upon public and private property and other illegal activities.

Article 56: Disciplinary measures for pastoral staff include admonishment, suspension from church office, removal from church office, and revocation of ministerial orders, disqualification of pastors and cancellation of church duties.

If any of the following circumstances pertain, the individual shall be disciplined according to the circumstances:

- (1) Failing to perform regular duties without cause;

- (2) Violating the Bible in his or her speech and written works, contravening the Creeds, the principles of faith of the Church ecumenical and the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China; spreading heresy, participating in and supporting heretical activities or organizations;
- (3) Splitting the church and destroying its unity;
- (4) Organizing illegal gatherings without authorization;
- (5) Going abroad without authorization to receive training and other acts against the principles of independence and self-management of the Chinese Church;
- (6) Accepting donations at home and abroad in violation of relevant state regulations;
- (7) Being under the control of foreign forces, accepting without authorization ordination to ministerial orders by foreign religious organizations or institutions;
- (8) Committing immoral or illegal criminal acts;
- (9) Promoting, supporting and financing of religious extremism, undermining national unity, splitting the country and carrying out terrorist activities or participating in related activities.

Article 57: Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action against a bishop must be proposed by the National Conference of the CCC&TSPM, which then informs the CCC&TSPM where the bishop serves; revocation of a bishop's ministerial orders must be done with deliberation and approval by the Standing Committees of the CCC&TSPM and approved by a two-thirds majority vote.

Disciplinary action against a minister must be proposed by the provincial (autonomous regions, municipality) CCC&TSPM; disciplinary action against an elder shall be put forward and declared by the city (district, prefecture, league) CCC&TSPM. Revocation of ministerial orders in these cases must be arrived at through deliberation and approval at a formal meeting of the provincial (autonomous region, municipality) CCC&TSPM.

Disciplinary action against a teacher or evangelist shall be decided following deliberation and approval by a formal meeting of the city (district, prefecture, league) CCC&TSPM.

Disciplinary action against pastoral staff involving suspension or revocation of ministerial orders must be reported to the churches and meeting points belonging to the local CCC&TSPM.

Article 58: Disciplinary action may be rescinded following the aforementioned procedures. Both the implementation of punishment and its cancellation shall be reported to and filed with the corresponding government religious affairs department and shall be publicized and reported within the appropriate context.

Article 59: Christians found to have engaged in any of the following, depending on the consequences, may be subject to admonishment and/or public warning, be denied the Eucharist or removed from the rolls of the church:

- (1) Disobeying church arrangements, disrupting worship or meetings or being contemptuous of the clergy;
- (2) Forming cliques or splitting churches;
- (3) Engaging in immoral behavior;
- (4) Violating relevant rules and regulations and the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China;
- (5) Participating in or supporting heresy or cult activities or organizations;
- (6) Submitting to control by foreign forces; spreading views in violation of the three-self principle;
- (7) Engaging in illegal or criminal acts.

Article 60: Removal of a Christian from a church's rolls should be reported to the CCC&TSPM by the church or meeting point, which is then responsible to report to other churches and meetings points in its area that accepting

this person in the church is deemed unsuitable. If in future the person is willing to repent, he or she may resume their standing in the faith after re-examination of their faith and morals in their original church or meeting point.

CHAPTER 11: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Article 61: This Order shall be effective on the date of its passage and promulgation by the National Conference of Joint Standing Committees of the CCC&TSPM. Revisions shall follow the same procedure.

Article 62: This Order shall be interpreted by the Standing Committees of the CCC&TSPM.

The Chinese text governs.

Translator's Note

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

On the Growth of an Ecclesiology for the Chinese Church

一张蓝图绘到底：论中国教会论的成长历程

CHEN YILU 陈逸鲁

Preface

In November 2018, the Tenth National Chinese Christian Conference (NCCC) was held in Beijing. One of the important achievements of the conference was the issuance of the newly revised Church Order of Protestant Churches in China,* plus the previously adopted “Five-Year Outline Plan to Promote the Contextualization of Protestant Christianity in China (2018-2022)” (see *Chinese Theological Review* 29: 6-26). For this reason, I think 2018 was an important year for the maturation of Chinese Christianity in terms of ecclesiology or could be considered its milestone year. Considering that this year (2019) is the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic

* There have been four iterations of the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China: 1991 Church Order for Trial Use (See *Chinese Theological Review*: 7 (1991): 21-30, 1996 Chinese Christian Church Order (See CTR: 12 , 63-79, 2008 Church Order of Protestant Churches in China (See CTR: 21(2008): 37-51 [reprinted in CTR: 27 (2015):59-74], and 2018 Church Order of Protestant Churches in China (see pages 1-22).

of China, I think it is necessary to review the development of Christianity in China from the First NCCC to the Tenth, especially in terms of the growth and deepening of ecclesiology.

Y. T. Wu's Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks

On September 23, 1950, the *People's Daily* published the "Christian Manifesto", issued by Christian circles in China, in which Wu played a leading part. The "Manifesto" signaled Christian support for the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system. From then on, Chinese Christianity and new China walked together on the same path, growing together. Due to the outbreak of the Korean War, the main task of the church at that time was to fit in with the Resist America, Aid Korea policy, launching the anti-imperialist patriotic movement and the denunciation movement. The anti-imperialist patriotic movement was mainly aimed at missionaries, while the denunciation movement included Chinese pastors and other clergy. The work of this period was that of "demolishing" or "severing"; how to "establish" was not yet being considered.

Not until 1954, from July 22-August 6, was the First NCCC held in Dengshikou Congregational Church, Beijing.¹ This was a milestone: the "First Conference" of Chinese Christianity (TSPM). The meeting established the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of Christianity in China. Y. T. Wu 吴耀宗 (Wu Yaozong) was elected chairman with Chen Jianzhen 陈见真, Wu Yifang 吴贻芳, Chen Chonggui 陈崇桂, Wang Changchuan 汪长川, Cui Xianxiang 崔宪祥 and

1 Cao Shengjie 曹圣洁, *Cao Shengjie: An Oral History*, Manuscript prepared by Luo Weihong 罗伟虹 (Shanghai: Shanghai Publishing Co., 2016), 47.

Ding Yuzhang 丁玉璋 elected vice-chairs.² The meeting was significant in the establishment of the Committee and in displaying the great unity of Chinese Christianity following the departure of Western mission boards and missionaries. Although there were still denominations at that time, adherence to the principle of unity laid the foundation for the post-denominational era and the future “unity process.”

In March 1956, the National Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China (TSPM) held its second (enlarged) plenary session in Shanghai. At the meeting, Y. T. Wu gave the report “On the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (July 1954-March 1956).”³ The first part of the report points out the “three achievements” of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement: “First, moved by the spirit of great unity, the TSPM has gained more extensive and in-depth development throughout the nation; second, due to the extensive and in-depth development of the TSPM, the Chinese Church has made great strides in implementing Three-Self and building the church. Third, the patriotic awareness of church staff and believers across the country has seen widespread improvement.”

The second part of the conference, “The Chinese Church’s Witness to its Times,” proposed “Three Great Witnesses” and “Ten Tasks.” It is essential to take another look at these witnesses and tasks, for these are the rudiments of a blueprint for a Chinese ecclesiology.

The Three Witnesses:

First, achieving the Three-Self Principle of the Chinese Church. “The basic significance of the TSPM is for Chinese believers to manage their own church well.” “A Chinese

2 Ding Yuzhang (1895-1975) was then vice-principal of NJUTS.

3 See *Tian Feng* 天风, then a bimonthly, No. 7 (April 16, 1956).

Church that has fully implemented self-government, self-support and self-propagation enables Chinese believers to more fully devote themselves to Christ and better witness to the gospel of Christ.” [In the Chinese text] there is a very important phrase in this paragraph, one that is used five times: “We believe.” The later expression of how to run the Chinese Church well according to the Three-Self Principle is basically founded on this witness.

Second, participating in socialist construction. “We believe that China’s liberation and China’s socialist construction clearly demonstrate God’s holy and loving will for the Chinese people.” This is the “love for country and love for church” of Chinese Christianity. Chinese Christianity is not a closed Christianity, but a Christianity that enters into society, one that can adapt to socialist society. We have been doing this since the beginning.

Third, safeguarding world peace. “Christians all over the world, including those in China, should take a very clear stand on the issue of peace, because the gospel we preach is the gospel of salvation and peace.” Christianity has always attached great importance to peace and stability and opposed disturbances and chaos. We say this not only with regard to the Western threat to China and socialist countries, but also because it is the consistent position of Christianity.

The Ten Tasks:

- 1) Consolidation and expansion of unity;
- 2) Church reform and reorganization, transforming the unreasonable phenomena left behind by the mission boards;
- 3) Self-support of all churches;
- 4) Self-propagation: the most basic mission of the church is to spread the gospel and bring people to the Lord;

- 5) Publication of Christian literature, mainly the works of Chinese pastors and church workers and believers to meet believers' needs;
- 6) Theological research, "making full use of the existing and needed books and materials of various Christian groups, beginning our research in theology, church history and church ministry and so on. In addition, we should also be engaged in the translation and compilation of classical works of the church;
- 7) Leadership training. "We must make full use of our capacity to train leaders for the Chinese Church in a planned way. On the one hand, we should enable brothers and sisters who are called to serve to get further education in seminaries; on the other hand, we should enable existing personnel in the church to have the opportunity for further study through specialized courses and correspondence courses. The church should also select active and promising Christians to serve as needed and give them the opportunity to give full play to their strengths. We should also pay special attention to the placement and use of intellectuals in the church;
- 8) We should call on believers from all walks of life to join with people at all levels of society in responding to the government's central movements to actively participate in socialist construction of the motherland;
- 9) We should support Christians and people of all countries in their efforts for world peace;
- 10) One of the main tasks of the TSPM is the promotion of the study of patriotism, "in order to improve believers' enthusiasm for socialist construction."

"Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks" comprehensively describes the beautiful vision for Protestant Christianity

in China, what Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie 曹圣洁 has called “The first blueprint for building up the church.”⁴ Professor Chen Zemin 陈泽民 believed that it is a clear statement of the overall direction for the future development of Chinese Protestant Christianity and has not changed to this day. The sixth task enumerated above states that we should strengthen the study of theology, church history and church ministry, while the seventh item emphasizes strengthening leadership training.⁵ In good and stable times, this blueprint can be achieved; had that been the case, China today would certainly be even better than it is.

But we are all at the mercy of the times. In 1957, China launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign, a campaign mainly aimed at cracking down on intellectuals. People with money and brains were most likely to be mistakenly branded as “Rightists.” Who is a rightist? This was up to the government officials at that time. Christian ministers were educated people, thus they were easily branded as “Rightists.” The Anti-Rightist Campaign brought down a large number of excellent ministers who supported Three-Self, such as Revs. Chen Chonggui and Fan Aishi 范爱侍, and many others who participated in the creation of this ecclesiological blueprint. The church was in great disorder, and many called the TSPM into question. In 1958, union worship was born of a situation in which there was really no alternative, because so many ministers had been sent to take part in productive labor; clergy and church workers and believers had doubts about Three-Self and their faith. But this state of affairs became in the end a good thing. When denominational structures and

4 Same as Note 3, 78.

5 Chen Zemin 陈泽民, “‘神学思想建设’: 回顾与前瞻” (Theological Reconstruction: Retrospect and Prospect) see *Theological Writings from Nanjing Seminary II (1993-2017)* (Nanjing: Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, 2017), 22.

functions collapsed, the church followed the path to unity and Chinese Protestantism was forced to take the first step in that process.

In late 1960 to early 1961, the Second NCCC was held in Shanghai. After the meeting, there were some signs of correcting the ultra-leftist line and resuming some church activities. However, the ultra-leftist trend of thought still occupied the mainstream. In addition, with start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, “the church was once again under greater, more serious and more widespread attack, and all church activity ceased.” Christianity basically came to a standstill everywhere in China. Chinese Christians and the Chinese people experienced the sufferings of the Cultural Revolution together.

Speaking of this period of history on the one hand shows that the growth of Christianity in China is inseparable from the establishment and development of new China. The TSPM made us a part of the Chinese people, sharing weal and woe with them. Today, however, some people still think that Christianity in China is a “foreign religion” and a “foreign power.” They don’t respect history and facts. They forget the contributions made to the new China by advanced figures like Y. T. Wu in the early days of the founding of the People’s Republic, forget the “political consultation,” that underlay the founding of the nation. And they forget the important achievements of the TSPM and look at Chinese Christianity from the mindset of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution. These erroneous ideas are not conducive to the vision of “drawing the largest concentric circle,” nor to realizing the great Chinese dream.

On the other hand, many people forget that the original intention of Three-Self was to build an independent Chinese Church that is “patriotic and church-loving.” There are those who have objections to Three-Self. They may not have fully grasped the Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks. They are

not clear about this blueprint or do not know that the real purpose of Three-Self is to build up the church.

As a result of the movement for “union worship,”⁶ the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution, some people were wronged and mistreated. They felt themselves to be injured parties who needed consolation, and so came to have differing views and opinions of Three-Self. They needed continued comfort and healing. We must not salt their wounds, nor add to the harm done to them. Here, Bishop K. H. Ting has set us a good example. As he once said, we worship Jesus Christ as Lord, (therefore) we have no reason to exclude (those who are) our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We should help and serve them.⁷ We should respect their feelings, and even more expand unity and strive to run the Chinese Church well. This can also be called “not abandoning the intention [love] we had at first.”

Not everyone was able to do this with regard to Three-Self. After 1980, the church followed the trend to reform and opening-up, and many clergy and church workers threw themselves into building up the church, but there were two sorts of people: one continued to take comfort and heal, while the other continued to rest on past laurels, holding high the flag of patriotism perfunctorily, while in fact enjoying the benefits and profiting from Three-Self, taking care of their own while treating church development as if it were none of their concern. Their work was careless and superficial, causing a dislike of Three-Self among some believers. This small group of people were sometimes called “Old Three-Selfers”; they were very powerful, and some

6 Union worship was a good thing, but in the course of the “union worship movement,” quite a few things happened that harmed clergy and church workers, and this caused their later antipathy to the movement.

7 K. H. Ting, *On Three-Self and Building the Church* (Shanghai: TSPM, 2000), 220.

have even been called “church tyrants.” Bishop Ting once criticized them saying “There are some people in Three-Self and in the government whose way of handling things has damaged their standing with the people and damaged the Three-Self and government image,” some even discriminate against them, which adds to their rebellious outlook.” These two kinds of people are not really involved in church building. It can be said that in laying out a blueprint for the Chinese Church and leading the construction of the church, Bishop Ting was a genuine leader.

Some people have misunderstood Y. T. Wu and Three-Self because they have not studied the “Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks” in depth. Some people blamed Wu and the Three-Self for the government’s attack on Wang Mingdao 王明道 and Watchman Nee 倪柝声 in the 1950s. I don’t know much about this, so I cannot add much here. However, I believe that Y. T. Wu was a devout Christian. At the deepest level, he initiated the TSPM out of his love for the church. In his heart, the “Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks” were the proper meaning of the Chinese Church.

Most people who criticized Wu took things out of context; those who had some contact with him formed a good impression. He was a modest man. He changed from a pacifist into a patriot. It was out of his patriotic feelings for his country that he built a Chinese Church for a new China. Bishop K. H. Ting called him “Forerunner Y. T. Wu.”⁸ Y. T. Wu was a representative from religious circles to the People’s Political Consultative Conference in the early days of the People’s Republic. And he can still be seen today in the painting “Great Unity of Political Consultation” that hangs in

8 See K. H. Ting, “先进的吴先生” (Forerunner Y.T. Wu) in *On Three-Self and Building the Church*, 47. English version in *Love Never Ends, Papers by K. H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 72-85.

the hall of the Central United Front Work Department. Mr. Wu is from Shunde, Guangdong province.

In the writings of Cao Shengjie and Bishop Ting, we can see that he retained the ways of Shunde people. In her essay, "Being Y. T. Wu's Secretary," Cao Shengjie notes that Wu Yaozong's family lived in Hongkou, not far from the TSPM Committee offices and at noon his family sent his lunch to the office in metal containers. After lunch he rested in a small room there and then rose to go back to work.⁹ This vignette of Mr. Wu's life reflects that he was a cautious person who carried on Three-Self work with great industry. Bishop Ting noted that: "My closest contact with Mr. Wu was from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. In addition to work problems, we often talked about some of the issues we called between us "theological reconstruction" or the "theological line." These were things we spoke of privately as two Christians. Even today I often connect these discussions with the years of eating fish congee at Mr. Wu's home.¹⁰ I mention these small things here to show that Mr. Wu was not some remote and aloof "nonbeliever," nor some big shot talking about "social gospel." He was a Chinese Christian, who lived among the Christian community, thinking about which direction the Chinese Church should take.

Y. T. Wu's wife was Dr. Yang Sulan 杨素兰, a well-known Christian doctor. She was friendly with Song Qingling 宋庆龄 [the wife of Sun Yat-sen 孙中山] and once treated her. Perhaps because of this relationship, coupled with his patriotic progressiveness, he was deeply appreciated by Chairman Mao and Zhou Enlai, and was shown special consideration. "It's my impression that the Party and the government respected Mr. Wu highly and took care of him. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the

9 Cao Shengjie *Oral History*, 95.

10 Ting, *On Three-Self and Building the Church*, 58.

National People's Congress from its founding until his death (September 17, 1979). This also shows that the Party and the government have always valued and respected patriotic members of religious circles. This is a fine tradition.

Mr. Wu was well acquainted with Chairman Mao and could have lived a carefree life, but he often worried and pondered about the Chinese Church, especially after his upsetting encounter with "ultra-left thought." He was very sad that the "Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks" could not be achieved. In particular, "in about 1964, Y. T. Wu came back from a meeting in Beijing to tell us that Chairman Mao had said, half-jokingly, "Your God is dead!" This was a very blunt remark and left him speechless. More than once he described his mood as "that of one facing the abyss" or "walking on thin ice." Sometimes he even felt it was up to him to pick up the pieces. But his faith was still strong. In his diary of March 11, 1964, he wrote: "Last night, I was uneasy, and after a long time of prayer, my mood was restored: Trust in God; all will be well." He was under a great deal of pressure at that stage. On the one hand, he was genuinely patriotic, but on the other hand, he saw that the Christianity that he loved could hardly survive under those circumstances.¹¹ Rev. Cao Shengjie's recollections reflect that Mr. Y. T. Wu was a truly patriotic and church-loving church leader. That personal blueprint was always in his heart. The times had deprived him of pen and ink, but not of his patriotic and church-loving determination and great dream.

11 Cao, 92.

Bishop K. H. Ting's Blueprint for the Church

If Mr. Y. T. Wu is the Moses of the Chinese Church, we can say Bishop K. H. Ting is its Joshua. He led the Church into a new era and became the leader of his generation in building up the Chinese Church. Under his leadership, the “Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks” were basically achieved, and in some respects, especially in ecclesiology and Theological Reconstruction, great progress was made.

Bishop Ting was elected vice-chair of the National TSPM at the Second NCCC (1960-61). He had returned from abroad in 1951, becoming president of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1952, a post he held until 2010. He once served as a vice-president of Nanjing University. In 1979, he established the Nanjing University Institute of Religion and served as the director. In February 1980, at the Shanghai meeting of the Enlarged Standing Committee of the Second TSPM, he mainly conveyed to attendees that the Party was going to implement the policy of freedom of religious belief. At the same time, he was ready for his co-workers to vent their grievances, but he also hoped that everyone would return to the church to continue its work. The Standing Committee comprised 49 members, but only 28 were in attendance, and many of them were elderly. Prior to the meeting, it was reckoned that some members of the Standing Committee would not be able to attend, so an Enlarged Meeting was held, extending invitations to others, and thus there were more than 30 participants. What surprised Bishop Ting was that no one made any complaints; instead there was great enthusiasm for rebuilding the church and confidence was high.¹² On March 1, the meeting issued its “Open Letter to Brothers and Sisters in Christ Throughout

12 When I was a theological student, Bishop Ting was very fond of talking about this event.

China.” On the strength of this letter, many pastors and church workers sought the implementation of policy, the return of church property and the reopening of churches. This open letter, like Martin Luther’s 95 principles, had great influence, though of course its nature was different.

In October 1980, the Third NCCC was held in Nanjing, during which the China Christian Council (CCC) was established. Bishop Ting was appointed Chair of the National TSPM and President of the CCC. To address the shortage of personnel, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary was reopened in 1981. In the fresh breezes of reform and opening up, Chinese Churches thrived and proliferated like spring bamboo shoots. Chinese Christianity had entered the “K. H. Ting era,” the golden age of the development of Christianity in China.

Bishop Ting’s intention was to move from three-self to three-well. To this end:

Persevering in Three-Self, emphasis should move from the anti-imperialist patriotic movement to running the church well. In his opening speech to the Third NCCC, “Retrospect and Prospect,” K. H. Ting presented a summary of his thinking: “The accomplishments of the TSPM have been great; The mission of the TSPM is not over; The church must not only be self-run but well-run.” Bishop Ting believed that the accomplishments were three: “making Chinese Christians patriotic Christians”; “changing the countenance of Christianity in China”; “Three-Self has helped persons in various circles of our society to gradually change their impressions of Chinese Christians and Chinese Christianity.” “Christianity is no longer a foreign religion.” The unfinished mission of Three-Self was to move “from a self-run to a well-run church.” Bishop Ting said: “The Three-Self Patriotic Movement has never worked for Three-Self for its own sake. From the beginning, the movement envisioned a well-governed, well-supported and well-propagating Church of

Christ growing up on Chinese soil.” “Today, as we continue to carry out the work of the TSPM, the work of tending the Lord’s flock by a well-run church has already been placed on the agenda for Chinese Christianity.”¹³

Bishop Ting also noted that,

To defend and uphold religious freedom is an integral part of the Chinese people’s efforts to uphold socialist democracy and the legal system. The efforts we religious people make from the standpoint of patriotism have been regarded by the central leadership in a speech at the recently held National People’s Congress as “precious efforts.” This gives us great encouragement. Today, the policy of religious freedom is being implemented in various parts of the country and remarkable strides have been made as far as Christianity is concerned. This is something Christians throughout the nation feel happy and heartened about. But for various reasons, the implementation of the policy of freedom of religious freedom still meets with difficulties in many places. That means we still have a lot to do. The Three-Self organizations must therefore continue to do their best to assist the government and groups concerned to perform this aspect of their work well. The above-mentioned are all tasks which the TSPM still has to do. It is for this reason that we say its mission is not yet finished.¹⁴

This was at that time the most popular and important part of his speech. In his speech to the Second Committee of the Second NCCC, Rev. T.C. Chao 赵紫宸 (Zhao Zichen) said: “These three, self-government, self-support and self-propagation, are, in a word, only one self: freedom. Our freedom of

13 Opening speech at the Third NCC in Nanjing, October 1980. “回顾与展望” (Retrospect and Prospect), in *Love Never Ends: Papers by K.H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 54-71.

14 *Ibid.*, 63-64.

religious belief is guaranteed by the constitution of the People's Republic of China."¹⁵ When Rev. Chao and Bishop Ting came to the point, the premise of insisting on Three-Self is to implement the policy of freedom of religious belief. Since the task of Three-Self has not been completed, we still need to fully implement the Party's policy of freedom of religious belief today.

In "Retrospect and Prospect" Bishop Ting also noted that

1) Chinese Christians were urgently in need of Bibles. In order to offer pastoral care, the Chinese Church had to publish the Bible. At the same time, revisions of the Chinese translation of the Bible also needed to be carried out in order to better express the original meaning. However, this was a solemn, holy work, that must be carried out with care and in an organized manner.

2) Implement publishing work. "We would all like to see periodicals published which would be helpful in introducing basic Christian doctrine, in studying the Bible, in cultivating the life of the Spirit, and in raising the standard of our colleagues' work."

3) Regular teaching at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary should be promptly resumed in order to carry out theological education appropriate to our situation in China and to prepare servants for the Lord's use."

4) Unite believers and strengthen ties. "We should find ways to enable Christians in any place who wish to benefit from mutual ties to do so."

5) It is proposed to establish the China Christian Council to serve as the organization handling church affairs, to work together with the TSPM to better carry out church work. The result of the conference was the establishment of the CCC, which focuses more on the work of church

15 *Tian Feng* 天风 (April 30, 1956): 172.

affairs and serves the majority of believers. This was a very important initiative to run the Chinese Church well.

In this opening speech, Bishop Ting described the second blueprint for Chinese Christianity: from three-self to three-well.

Bishop K. H. Ting was elected Chair of the TSPM Committee and President of the CCC in 1980. At the end of 1996, at the Sixth NCCC, he retired with honor. During his tenure of nearly 15 years, he accomplished much and made outstanding contributions. Professor Chen Zemin called this “the second stage” of Chinese Christianity.¹⁶ However, we prefer to extend this stage to the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Christian Patriotic Movement Committee (1954-2014) in 2014, or to the Tenth NCCC in November 2018, because Bishop Ting’s influence continued despite his retirement. The reason we extend this to 2014 is that the promotion of the Sinicization of Christianity was then becoming increasingly prominent. In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the TSPM, a seminar on the Sinicization of Christianity was held along with the other activities. If we take November 2018 as our cutoff point, it is mainly because “Sinicization of Chinese Christianity” was written into the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China” passed that year and in that document the Chinese Church is positioned as “a uniting church,” which is a milestone. Bishop Ting emphasized the following as the ministries of the Chinese Church:

1. Insist that the party and the government earnestly implement the policy of freedom of religious belief, which benefits all religious believers in China, including all Christians.

16 Chen Zemin, “Theological Reconstruction: Retrospect and Prospect,” 23. Also, Professor Chen mistakenly put the date of the Third NCC as August 1980. It was in fact held in October 1980.

2. Persevere in moving from “three-self” to “three-well,” integrating love for country and love for church, thereby winning the hearts of the people and the affirmation of Party and government.
3. Take the lead in re-opening Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, with a stress on leadership training, to benefit the present and profit the future.
4. Attach great importance to the publication of the Bible, establishing the Amity Printing Factory (Amity Printing Co., Ltd.) to print Bibles for the Chinese Church. This will benefit the majority of believers. Today, the Amity Printing Co., Ltd. has become the largest single print Bible publisher in the world, benefiting believers and lovers of the Bible at home and abroad, all through the initiative of Bishop K.H. Ting.
5. As the first non-governmental organization with a Christian background in China, the Amity Foundation opened space for Christianity to participate in social services and publicized China’s policy of religious freedom.
6. Actively carry out international exchanges with friendly foreign countries, allow the CCC to join the World Council of Churches, opening up new channels for people to people diplomacy, enabling Chinese Christianity to enter the international arena, uniting with many good friends, striving for more voice, and creating a model for telling “Chinese stories,” including supporting the Bible Ministry Exhibition.
7. Advocate for and establish the China Committee on Religion and Peace, propelling the third witness of the Three Witnesses into a greater arena, and make significant contributions to loving peace and opposing hegemony.

8. Stress Christian unity in China and advocate that Three-Self should show care for and serve the “Christian meeting points.”
9. Adhere to mutual respect in faith, seeking the common ground while reserving differences, and maintain the unity of the church in the post-denominational period.
10. Take the lead in initiating and promoting Theological Reconstruction.

This last point, especially, was most often in Bishop Ting’s thoughts. He felt that to run the Chinese Church well, the church should have its own theological direction or line. He mentioned this frequently in his exchanges with Y. T. Wu in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷ In 1981, Bishop Ting was again thinking of his theological line: “The significance of Three-Self theology can also be seen in its identification with the people (Hebrews 2:17). The glory of Christianity should make its own contribution through the culture of every ethnic group. Today, it is our task to change the Chinese people and enrich their understanding of the gospel. We can talk about two C’s (Christ and China), one strengthening the other. If we cannot realize the church’s selfhood, this will be the biggest tragedy of Christianity in China and would put it into crisis.”¹⁸

After Bishop Ting retired from his leadership positions in the CCC&TSPM, he thought further about this issue, especially General Secretary Jiang Zemin’s “three sentences” on religious work during the National United Front Work Conference in 1993: “completely and correctly implement the policy of freedom of religious belief; strengthen

17 Ting, *On Three-Self and Building the Church*, 47.

18 Cao Shengjie 曹圣洁, *Nanjing Theological Review* 2, 154.

supervision over religious affairs according to law; actively guide religion to adapt to socialist society.” Bishop Ting was deeply aware of the importance of this issue. He believed that on a deeper level, “adaptation” should be ideological, especially theological adaptation.

Professor Wang Weifan 汪伟藩 came to an important conclusion: K. H. Ting is a statesman. Bishop Ting had the foresight to introduce the point that religious concepts be adjusted in order to adapt to socialist society. In August 1998, he addressed the Xi’an meeting of the CPPCC Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission: “A Call to Adjust Religious Concepts.” It was a rousing call, gaining the support of the central leadership and response from the religious community.

In September 1998, the launch ceremony for Bishop Ting’s *Collected Works* (丁光训文集) was held in Beijing. In November 1998, a symposium was held in the Xinde Building in Nanjing. This could be called a “briefing,” while the main event was the Jinan Conference of January 17, 1998. In Jinan, Bishop Ting spoke on the “gradualness of biblical revelation,” touching upon his views on the Bible, revelation, history, God and Christology. This, and his “Cosmic Christ,” were two very important theological articles.

In this way, Theological Reconstruction was begun. But there were many concerns among his co-workers in the church. They were afraid there might be another campaign, and they feared the Chinese Church would split because of faith issues and unity would not be achieved. When I spoke with Mr. Han Wenzao 韩文藻, then president of the CCC, he expressed his concerns. Mr. Han was very modest. He said he did not understand theology and asked me whether things would be okay. After several years of full discussion, in 2002 the “Points of Consensus on Chinese Christian Theological

Thinking,” was issued.¹⁹ Theological Reconstruction, which Bishop Ting initiated, became a great event in the history of Chinese Christianity with its proposal that the building up of the Chinese Church should proceed from strengthening theology, so that the church would have roots and foundation, and its “wisdom and years would grow together.” This is a very important ecclesiological idea.

Views on the Church in the Newly Revised Church Order of Protestant Churches in China

In November 2018, the Tenth NCCC was held in Beijing. Attention should be paid to the views on the church expressed in this Church Order of Protestant Churches in China (hereafter the 2018 Order) issued by the conference. The 2018 revision of the Order was fairly extensive, and the ecclesiology expressed is relatively clear and comprehensive, representing great progress in the process of constructing Chinese Christianity.

The formulation of the 2018 Order is based on the theology of ecclesiology, that is, what kind of Chinese Church we will build.

Thinking about the formulation of a church order began in the Chinese Protestant Church in 1986, at the time of the Fourth NCCC. The church had developed rapidly, but “the harvest was plentiful and the workers few,” which opened

19 As for the course and achievements of Theological Reconstruction, see three articles in the *Theological Writings from Nanjing Seminary II (1993-2017)*: Chen Zemin’s “Theological Reconstruction: Retrospect and Prospect”; Deng Fucun’s “中国教会神学思想建设的基本思路” (The Basic Thinking of the Theological Reconstruction in the Chinese Church), 39-49; and Gao Feng’s “神学思想建设” (Theological Reconstruction), 54-66. See also Cao Shengjie’s “丁光训主教与基督教神学思想建设” (Bishop K.H. Ting and Christian Theological Reconstruction), in *Cao Shengjie: Oral History*, 219-225. These four articles are very clear, so I will not discuss them further here.

the way for many problems. People felt that if the church was not well governed, confusion would arise and the name “Chinese Christianity” would be seriously challenged. At that time, the senior pastors were people of foresight who felt that the problem was extremely important and urgent. In 1987 a working group for the development of a church order was established, with Rev. Peter Cai Wenhao 蔡文浩 as group leader and Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie as executive secretary. Work was efficiently commenced.²⁰ After four years’ effort, in 1991, the Fifth NCCC passed the Church Order for Trial Use in Chinese Churches. The two terms, indicating “trial use” and “Chinese Churches [meaning local churches-ed.]” show the caution of the senior pastors at that time, demonstrating that the post-denominational era church was relatively loosely organized and thus, unity could not be over-emphasized. The National CCC&TSPM respected the autonomy of the CCs and TSPM associations in each province (city and autonomous region). In 1996, the Sixth NCCC adopted the Chinese Christian Church Order, and the Order has been known by this name [see “From the Editor” for titles in translations] from then on, reflecting the further progress toward unity of Chinese Churches.

At the Joint Standing Committees meeting on January 8, 2008, of the Seventh TSPM and the Fifth CCC, the newly revised 2008 Church Order of Protestant Churches in China was adopted. This was another major revision, with the most important change being inclusion of a new Chapter Two on “Faith.” Views of the members of the Joint (Enlarged) Committee on this addition differed greatly. Older members worried that it might disrupt the process of church unity. They were aware that during the period from the implementation of union worship to the post-denominational era, the unity of the Chinese Church had

20 Cao, 226.

been very fragile. There had been more emphasis on the three-self patriotism aspect, and matters of faith and theology were rarely broached.²¹ After all, this Order was something new. For the sake of prudence, the meeting decided to set up several working groups to be sent to places where believers were more numerous, those with prominent former denominations, or those in important locations, such as some churches in Beijing, Hangzhou, Fuzhou, etc. At that time, as Associate Secretary General, I took a group to Fujian to look into things. Because the issues with former denominations in Fujian were quite marked, when the union worship movement was launched in Fujian, a place that attached great importance to faith, union worship did not really happen. The results of our survey then (2008) were very encouraging. Everyone endorsed the idea of an expression of faith. They all said the same thing: how can the church not have a confession of faith? In this way, the church order revision group's work was smoothly begun.

At that time, most of the co-workers who actively advocated for the addition of the chapter on “faith” were relatively young—“young turks,” they were called. There were a number of reasons for advocating for the addition of a “faith” chapter: first, the Chinese Church should strengthen its ecclesiastical nature and lay a solid foundation for its ecclesiology. Second, the CCC had joined the WCC. We are an ecclesiastical body, and only through faith can we integrate with the universal church. Third, when the CCC was founded,

21 At that time, Pastor Deng Fucun 邓福村 had greater concerns, because in the church in Zhejiang, faith was emphasized more strongly, and there were many different ideas and views. Among the elder pastors, there were often threats of “withdrawing from Three-Self,” which caused apprehension among the CCC&TSPM leadership. During the meeting Rev. Cao Shengjie proposed that rather than taking a decision to pass the chapter at present, some investigation should be done first. I remember this event quite clearly.

it was positioned as the church affairs organization, adhering to the Three-Self principle, to run the Chinese Church well. Therefore, the building up of faith should be emphasized. Fourth, there are people who often attack the CCC&TSPM and the church as “non-spiritual” or even non-religious, or as liberals. Including an expression of faith in the Order functions to refute attacks from those with ulterior motives, as well as providing the majority of believers with a good understanding of the truth of things. Fifth, it aids in preventing and combating heresy. We must begin at the source, working to reduce the chances of heresy taking advantage of our achievements. This Chapter was not easily accepted into the Order, but it was of great significance. It moved the construction of the Chinese Church forward and enriched the church’s ecclesiology.

For other contents and the significance of the Order adopted in 2008, please refer to Rev. Gao Feng’s 高峰 article “A Brief Introduction to the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China.”²² This Order was also included in the collection of religious laws and regulations compiled by the Department of Policies and Regulations of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs,²³ as an important regulatory document.

The Church Order of Protestant Churches in China issued by the Tenth NCCC in November 2018 (hereafter referred to as “the current Order” or “the new Order”), clearly contains comparatively large changes. First, in terms of length, the former Order had 8 Chapters and 38 Articles, while the current Order has 11 Chapters and 62 Articles, with much richer content.

22 Gao Feng: 高峰, “《中国基督教教会规章》简介” (A Brief Introduction to the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China), in *Nanjing Theological Review* nos.3-4 (2014): 3-23; English translation in *Chinese Theological Review*:27 (2015): 23-58.

23 See *Compilation of Religious Laws and Regulations*, Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2010, pp. 498-512.

Second, in terms of structure, in response to the new Regulation on Religious Affairs, the chapters are set out as follows: Chapter One: General Principles, Chapter Two: Faith, Chapter Three: The Church, Chapter Four: The Life of the Church, Chapter Five: Christians, Chapter Six: Ministerial Orders, Chapter Seven: Church Organization and Management (Churches and Meeting Points), Chapter Eight: Seminaries and Bible Colleges, Chapter Nine: Charities, Chapter Ten: Discipline, and Chapter Eleven: Supplementary Provisions. Chapters Seven to Nine are obviously in line with the requirements of “administrative subjects” in the new Regulation on Religious Affairs, highlighting the Order’s contemporaneity and consciousness of the laws and regulations.

Third, Article 3 of the new Order states that “the Chinese Church is a uniting church,” practicing the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC) mode of governance.” This is a huge change. Originally the formulation of the Chinese Church was more implicit, such as: maintaining a union form of worship, “post-denominational era,” maintain unity, etc., but without explicit clarification. This revision is direct: “a uniting church and a CCC&TSPM governance” is not yet a “united church,” but one in the process of uniting. How long this process will take is still unknown. But a “CCC&TSPM governance” is definite. In other words, how well the CCC&TSPM unite depends on their ability to govern and art of management. There is still a long way to go to run the mission of the Chinese Church in accordance with the Three-Self Principle.

Fourth, the revision of the Chapter on “Ministerial Orders” in the 2018 Order is also quite clear: a) “teacher” or “assistant pastor” has been dropped because it is believed that the term is not in general use, though it may still be found in some areas; furthermore “teacher” is now used

in the educational system, thus the use of the term may be confusing. As for “assistant pastor,” this is out of keeping with Chinese culture, nor is it an administrative rank, so it is also unsuitable.²⁴ b) The wording in reference to pastors in the previous Order (including here and below, the tradition in individual churches of elders, etc. equivalent to pastors) has been dropped since it was felt that the formulation belonged to a certain period and moreover that the expression was not standard. c) “Local churches” has been replaced. The revised text speaks directly of the Chinese Church, emphasizing its unity and union. The Chinese Church is a designation that also strengthens the authority of the CCC&TSPM mode of governance.²⁵

Fifth, during this revision, there was also more discussion of the sacraments, worship and liturgy. The 2018 Order contains greater detail; see Articles 17-23, and especially Article 19: “Any vestments worn by ordained persons taking part in the sacrament should reflect a spirit of unity. Ordained persons taking part in the sacrament should wear vestments appropriate to their status.” Article 17: “Worship is an important component of church life, as well as of the spiritual life of a Christian. In worship, Christians are connected through the Holy Spirit with the Head, who is Christ, and become one with the Church ecumenical. The basic parts of worship include hymns, Bible readings, a sermon, prayers, blessings and offerings. The liturgy is the concrete expression of worship, which includes the reasonable arrangement of the order of worship, choice of vestments and accessories, the arrangement of the altar and choice of sacred music. The goal is to give expression

24 Compare Articles 11 and 18 of the 2008 Order with Article 27 in the 2018 Order.

25 Compare the wording in Article 18 of the 2008 Order with Article 27 in the 2018 Order.

to faith in God, to meet the spiritual needs of Christians, to increase the sense of the sacred and solemnity and enhance the unity of the church.” Truscott states that “when we do liturgy right, ‘liturgical’ worship will reflect the church’s identity as the body of Christ, which is composed of people with different gifts, visions and positions of service” (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4). It also symbolizes that we should pour out our gifts for the common service.”²⁶ This shows the importance of good worship in promoting church unity.

Sixth, the 2018 Order especially emphasizes the timeliness and orientation of the church. Article 2 closely links the orientation of running the Chinese Church well to the needs of the times. The 2008 Order stated: “The Chinese Church functions according to the principle of self-government, self-support and self-propagation (hereafter three-self principle) which encompasses independence and self-management, actively engages in Theological Reconstruction and guides Christians in making a contribution to the building of an harmonious society.” The 2018 Order has: “The Chinese Church functions according to the principle of self-government, self-support and self-propagation (hereafter: three-self principle) which embraces independence and self-management, upholds the direction of Sinicization of Christianity, follows the path of patriotism and love of church, and the deepening of theological reconstruction, implementing the core values of socialism and actively adapting to socialist society.” This article fully expresses the general direction, task and goal of running the Chinese Church well, along with the requirements and characteristics of the secular nature of the Chinese Church, which is its national and contextual nature; it is the important spirit of building a Chinese Church

26 Jeffrey A. Truscott, *Liturgy: A Practical Guide*, tr. Zhou Yongci, Hong Kong: Christian Literature and Art Press, 2017, 28.

with Chinese characteristics. This not only expresses the political requirements of running the Chinese Church well, it also expresses the goal of the 2018 revision of the Order: building a Chinese Christian Church.

The interpretation of the 2018 Order here is not a general interpretation, but a point to be made: the new Order describes the blueprint for the Chinese Church in the new era, a bridge connecting past and future. From the “Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks” of Mr. Y. T. Wu, through Bishop K. H. Ting’s “from self-run to well run” and Theological Reconstruction; as well as “the uniting church” and Sinicization of Chinese Christianity to the present, just beginning, the burden is heavy and the way long as we constantly work hard to improve the church’s ability to adapt to socialist society.

Conclusion

Revisiting the “Three Witnesses and Ten Tasks” of the Chinese Church from Three-Self to the Sinicization of Christianity today demonstrates that there is a blueprint for the Chinese Church, one for building the church that Mr. Y. T. Wu, Bishop K. H. Ting and others among the elder generations of leaders had in mind. They made Three-Self their project and drew a blueprint from it. They were very devoted to their work and matured along with the People’s Republic of China, witnessing the nation’s development. Y. T. Wu had high aims, but due to the damage wrought by ultra-leftism, the blueprint could not be realized. With the process of reform and opening up, Bishop Ting saw great achievements. Since the Chinese Church is rooted in the new China, sharing the same breath and destiny with the Chinese people, the basic premise relies on whether Chinese society is stable and healthy, and whether the policy of freedom

of religious belief is fully and seriously implemented. We believe that the new era of China will be better and better.

The blueprint shows that the Chinese Church is also growing ecclesiology. Bishop Ting once said: "If before the Liberation Y. T. in theological thinking, devoted himself more to his conceptions of God and of Christ and to politico-ethical questions, after the Liberation he paid greater attention to ecclesiology."²⁷

"That Christianity in any country should be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating and thereby become a religion with a national character of its own is a vision any Third World church must give priority in its ecclesiology."²⁸ The vision the TSPM had at its inception, was the building of a Church in China that was governed even better, supported even better, and propagated even better."²⁹ On the one hand, the Chinese Church is universal, "the church is the body of Christ, and Christ is the head of the church. The church is preached by the apostles and is unique, holy and universal." But "the church is both universal and local."³⁰ On the other hand, it is local and national. Many theological books talk about the universality of the church, and sometimes this comes close to a word game, but constructing a local Chinese Church is a course of tears and blood, the exploration and practice of life, until finally we can "bring the concepts of the ultimate and the penultimate together, can go so far as to unify the binary perspectives. That is a call for us to acknowledge their resolution, the call to "love country and love church."³¹

27 "On Three Self and Building the Church," 55.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 25.

30 2018 Church Order of Protestant Churches in China, Chapter 6.

31 "On Three-Self and Building the Church," 55.

At this point, we can see that the ecclesiology of the Chinese Church contains two aspects: the church theory of the organic unity of patriotism and love for church and the “United Chinese Church.” The light and practice of the Chinese Church in local and national church theory has made a contribution to the universal church. Such an ecclesiology meets the needs of the Chinese Church and can also contribute to the universal church. We must continue to refine the blueprint.

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The Church's Decisions to Persevere in and Deepen Union Worship*

联合礼拜：中国基督教会两次抉择的成果

ZHANG HUA 张化

The term “union worship” as used in this paper refers to Chinese Christians from different denominations joining together in worship.¹ Bishop K. H. Ting spoke highly of union worship, saying that Protestant Christianity in China made three remarkable strides in the 1950s and '60s: implementing Three-Self, founding Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NJUTS) and holding union worship.² But to date, the depth and scope of research on union worship, whether in China or abroad, is far less than that on

* English title has been modified for readers unfamiliar with the context.

- 1 Gu Mengfei has described union worship in some detail: “Union worship which means Christians that in the past belonged to different denominations no longer make such distinctions. Now they gathered in the same church for worship, shared prayers and received Holy Communion together. Pastors no longer inquired which denomination they are from, rather they cooperated in holding worship and undertaking pastoral care. In this way they have formed a new church that does not use denominational names.” See Gu Mengfei 顾梦飞: “宗派后时期: 中国教会迈向合一”(The Post-denominational era: The Chinese Church moves towards unity), in *Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 3 (2009): 153.
- 2 K. H. Ting 丁光训, “回顾走过的路,”(A Look Back at the Way We Have Come), in 丁光训文集 (Collected Works of K. H. Ting) (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 1998). English translation in *Love Never Ends: Papers by K. H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing Yilin Press, 2000), 491. Unless otherwise noted, all citations from Bishop Ting's works are taken from this volume.

the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM); what research there is centers around 1958. In fact, organizing was an act of survival in response to constraints imposed by the Japanese authorities; take the Christian spiritual bands, for example.³ And in 1947, a conference held to establish rules and systems and reorganize the leading bodies happened at the initiative of the small denominations among the charismatics and the independent churches that had continued to develop and expand during the war.⁴ Analysis of union worship should also be split into two time periods. The first period is around 1958, when the main reason union worship could be put into practice was due to social influences. The second period begins with reform and opening up and continues to this day. Union worship persists because the churches undertook reasoned reflection, made choices, and put it into practice, continually deepening it. Shanghai is the center of Chinese Christianity and of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Christian Churches in China (TSPM). Today, it remains the seat of the TSPM and the China Christian Council (CCC) (hereafter jointly referred to as the CCC&TSPM). Union worship in Shanghai was more typical. Of course, new problems and trends facing union services now are also worthy of attention and consideration.

3 Following the Japanese occupation of the Shanghai concessions, all cultural organizations, including religious organizations, were forced to register with the Japanese authorities, otherwise they could not hold activities. It was further stipulated that only soundly organized or united churches could register and hold activities, so 34 small evangelical denominations in the city joined together in a spiritual band in order to be able to register and hold activities.

4 See Zhang Hua 张化, "20 世纪上半叶上海基督教属灵派述评" (Review of Evangelical denominations in Shanghai in the first half of the 20th century) in *Studies in Christianity*, Vol. 17 (Shanghai: Shanghai Joint Publishing, 2018), 21, 33.

Implementation of Union Worship, 1958

In 1958, union worship was made possible by the social and political situation, along with internal changes in the Church. In fact, most of the internal changes in the Church were also due to the social situation. Therefore, implementation of union worship came about mainly due to social influences.

Particular Social and Political Circumstances and their Influence on the Church

During the Korean War (October 1950 to July 1953), China put the efforts of the whole nation into resisting the US and aiding North Korea. On September 23, 1950, Christian circles published the "Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China," generally known as the "Christian Manifesto," and launched the Three-Self Reform Movement. On December 10 of the same year, the United States froze all China's public and private property in the United States, and China froze US assets in China in retaliation. The church was forced to support itself. On April 21, 1951, the then Government Administration Council (later [1954] the State Council) held a meeting in Beijing on "Handling of Christian groups receiving subsidies from the United States of America," and launched a tax-free policy for church-owned property. At the meeting, Christians began to accuse US imperialists of the crime of using Christianity to harm our country; they established the Preparatory Committee of the Christian Resist America, Aid Korea Three-Self Movement. Following the meeting, a denunciation campaign was launched throughout the country, and many church leaders made public self-criticisms. From the end of that year to October 1952, the country launched the "Three Anti [3-anti, 5-anti]" Campaign. Watchman Nee 倪柝声 of

the Christian Assembly was arrested in Northeast China for committing the crime of “five poisons” [or perceived threats to the nation-ed]. Hu Zuyin 胡祖荫, the director-general of the Chinese Christian Literature Society, resigned after the staff reported that he had financial problems.

From the end of 1952 to the first half of 1954, the teaching and administrative staff received patriotic ideological education in different levels and groups. Many people gradually came to support the Three-Self Movement. In July 1954, the First National Christian Conference was held. The name of the movement was changed to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). The National Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement was established, with Y. T. Wu 吴耀宗 (Wu Yaozong) as chairman. After that meeting, only a few of the larger independent churches, such as Christian Tabernacle, Christian Assemblies and the Ling-Liang (Bread of Life) churches, were left in opposition to the TSPM. The main reason for their opposition was that they had no relationship to imperialism and had long been three-self. They were evangelical and attacked the leaders of the TSPM as unbelievers. In September of the same year, the Government Administration Council passed the Interim Regulations on Public-Private Joint Industrial Enterprises, and began [the process of] socialist transformation. By early 1956, it had realized full industrial public-private joint ventures. In July 1956, the Shanghai Housing and Land Bureau, with reference to measures taken for socialist transformation of private rentals, carried out “charter-rental-sublet” management for rental of religious buildings, that is, the housing management department was responsible for management and maintenance, and paid fixed “charter-rental fees” to

religious organizations.⁵ In December of the same year, the Christian Literature Council, the Baptist Press, the YMCA (Association) Press and the China Sunday School Association jointly established the China Christian Joint Press. In July 1955, the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries [Sufan Campaign] was launched with the goal of eliminating hidden counterrevolutionaries in the Party, government and military. On August 8 of the same year, Wang Mingdao's 望明道 counter-revolutionary group, the Beijing Christian Tabernacle, was exposed. On September 8, the counter-revolutionary group led by Gong Pinmei 龚品梅, a Catholic, was discovered. On January 29, 1956, Watchman Nee's counter-revolutionary group in the Shanghai Christian Assemblies office was discovered. From February to March, the key believers in the Christian Assemblies focused on study, improved their [political] consciousness, changed their attitudes and reorganized their leadership. At the same time, the "Exhibition of the Evidence of Criminal Activities of the Watchman Nee Counter-Revolutionary group" was held and had considerable social impact. After the Sufan Campaign, except for a small number of free preachers, the majority, among them the Ling-Liang Hall, joined TSPM. In March 1956, the National TSPM Committee held its Second National Conference, which resolved to begin building up the church, calling for "Three Witnesses" and completion of "Ten Tasks." The core of the "Ten Tasks" was to strengthen the church's self-construction, in hopes that every church, according to its actual situation, undertake a comprehensive consideration and reorganization of its internal structure, personnel planning, ministry, finance and other aspects of the church, toward the goal of achieving a sound

5 Shanghai Religious Publications Compilation Committee: 《上海宗教志》 (Religion in Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2001), 617.

organization, establishing the institution, strengthening the leadership and improving the work.

At the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in early 1956, Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin, setting off an anti-Communist, anti-socialist trend throughout the world, putting the Communist Party of China on high alert. The Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China held in September of the same year pointed out in its resolution that China had basically completed the “three major [socialist] transformations,” and that the central task of the Party should shift to economic construction. On February 27, 1957, Mao Zedong delivered a speech on “The Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” at the Supreme Council of State, pointing out that large-scale mass-based class struggle was basically over; the then current fundamental task was to protect and develop productive forces and make war on nature. In particular, “we cannot use administrative orders to eliminate religion, and we cannot force people not to believe in religion. We cannot force the people to give up idealism or to believe in Marxism.”⁶ Zhou Enlai also clearly pointed out that religious belief is an issue of people’s ideological belief and does not involve political issues.⁷ These fundamental adjustments served to make the social and political environment more relaxed, and positioned religious issues in the field of ideological belief rather than the political field, so they could not be eliminated by administrative orders. After hearing Mao’s speech at the meeting, Y. T. Wu addressed the third

6 Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题” (On the correct handling of contradictions among the people), in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 5 (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1977), 368.

7 Contemporary China Series Editorial Committee, 《当代中国的宗教工作: 上》 (Religious work in contemporary China: I) (Beijing: Contemporary China Press, 1998), 113.

session of the second CPPCC National Committee on March 8, pointing out problems in the implementation of religious policies. He divided these into two categories: tangible and intangible. Intangible problems are mainly discrimination against Christians; the harm caused by intangible problems is even more serious. He pointed out that some institutions and schools took a special view of Christians; regardless of their work or academic performance, their religious beliefs were often seen as a disadvantage. Some Christian students in colleges and universities reflected that after the Anti-Japanese War, they were regarded as problematic because of their Christian beliefs. Therefore, they dared not go to church or talk about religion with their Christian classmates. These situations were caused by some people's prejudices towards religion and the resulting discrimination. The causes of discrimination are complex, including the influence of one-sided, subjective and unfounded criticism of religious publications. He suggested clearing up one-sided views on religion and called on the government to introduce some additional provisions to better implement religious policies.⁸

It can be seen from this that the core of intangible problems was the social position of religion. Later in the same meeting, Rev. Chen Chonggui 陈崇桂, vice-chairman of the National TSPM Committee, made a speech in support of Y. T. Wu. He struggled to find common ground among Marxism, Chinese mainstream ideology and Christian belief. He affirmed the achievements of the government in implementing religious policies, and pointed out some shortcomings, but he went to extremes. "It's more upsetting for us that the chapel was defiled than if our ancestral graves

8 "关于贯彻宗教政策的一些问题—吴耀宗的发言" (Some issues in the implementation of religious policies — a speech by Wu Yaozong) in *People's Daily*, March 9, 1957, 4.

were dug up,” he said, referring to a chapel in an ethnic minority area being razed to build a roadway.⁹ This speech was later regarded as a great poison against the Party and socialism, and was the reason Chen Chonggui was labelled a Rightist.¹⁰

On April 27, 1957, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued its directive on the rectification movement. The original plan was for a mild ideological education movement. In order to mobilize non-Party personages to help the Communist Party with rectification, the United Front Department of the Central Committee held symposiums for democratic parties, democratic non-Party personages and notables from industry and commerce in early and mid-May respectively, which ended on June 3rd and 8th. A total of 38 symposiums were held, with 170-180 speakers. When Mao Zedong listened to the exchange report for the third or the fourth time, ... he felt the problem had already turned hostile to the Party. On May 15, Mao wrote the article “Things are Beginning to Change” and sent it to senior cadres of the CPC. He also asked that the opinions of democratic people in the CPPCC be published in the *People’s Daily*. On June 8, the Party issued Mao’s directive: “Muster our forces to repulse the Rightists’ wild attacks”; on the same day, an editorial, “What is this for?” was published in the *People’s Daily*. The Anti-Rightist Campaign was begun. On October 9, Mao made a summary speech entitled “Be activists in promoting the revolution” at the Enlarged Third Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of

9 “保护宗教信仰,尊重宗教信仰—陈崇桂的发言” (Protecting religious belief and respecting religious belief — Chen Chonggui’s speech), in *People’s Daily*, March 25, 1957, 14.

10 Shen Derong 沈德溶, 《在三自工作五十年》 (50 years of working in Three-Self) (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 2000), 62.

China, which overturned the correct judgment of the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China on the main contradictions in Chinese society, holding that “the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and that between the socialist road and the capitalist road is undoubtedly the current one in China.”¹¹ This judgment was affirmed by the second session of the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China in May 1958. The second session also adopted the general socialist construction line of “pressing ahead to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results,” which set off the upsurge of the Great Leap Forward and the people’s commune movement.

In January 1958, the United Front Department of the Central Committee, together with the Central Propaganda Department, the Central Organization Department and other relevant departments, selected 96 well-known Rightists as examples, put forward the Preliminary opinions on the handling of some Rightists, and after submitting the list to the Central Committee for approval, forwarded the names to all localities for consultation. The vast majority of the 96 were dismissed from public office, sent to reeducation through labor or supervised labor. Only two were exempted from punishment.¹²

The “leftist” inclination of the whole society seriously affected religious policy, and the influence of religious policy on Christianity was more direct and severe. The Fourth National Conference on Religious Work was held from August 24 to September 3, 1957. The meeting assessed the political attitude of the Han religious community, basically affirming that the religious community had played a positive

11 《毛泽东选集》(Works of Mao Zedong), Vol. 5:475.

12 Li Weihuan 李维汉, 《回忆与研究》(Reminiscence and study) (Beijing: CPC Historical Materials Press, 1986), 838.

role in the democratic reform; the democratic reform hurdle was behind it. But at the moment, the socialist revolution hurdle still lay ahead. In the struggle between two roads or ways, all kinds of situations in religious circles remained very complicated. Socialist political and ideological awareness was not high enough among the believing masses. In the upper levels of religious circles, there were few leftists who really supported the Party and socialism, and most of them had not drawn a clear line between themselves and the imperialists and counter-revolutionaries. They remained firmly opposed to the Party and socialism.¹³ The meeting also discussed in detail a plan of socialist education for Han nationality religious circles, including who was to be educated, the form of the education, steps in the work and policy boundaries. The “who” or object was mainly religious professionals; the form was to promote the convening of representative meetings of all religions; the steps were to hold representative meetings for each religion at the national level first, and then to hold meetings at other levels respectively to transmit information. The policy boundary stopped at any debate between materialism and idealism; denominational contradictions within various religions were to be avoided. The very small number of people who spread rightist opinions could be criticized. However, criticism of deputies to the National People’s Congress, members of the CPPCC, members of the Standing Committee of religious organizations, and criticism of Catholics with the rank of bishop and above must first be submitted to the Central Committee for approval.¹⁴ In November, a report based on the spirit of the meeting was approved by the central

13 He Husheng 何虎生, 《中国共产党的宗教政策研究》(Research on the religious policy of the Communist Party of China) (Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2004), 110.

14 *Religious Work in Contemporary China*, Vol, 115.

government. According to the report, although there was no Anti-Rightist Campaign being carried out in religious circles in name, there had been an Anti-Rightist struggle in the actual work. From October 28 to December 4 of the same year, the 10th Enlarged Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Third National Congress of the Communist Party of China was held to carry out socialist education and identify five rightists.¹⁵ The meeting also suggested that provincial and city level Three-Self organizations should make carrying out a socialist education movement a priority in the first half of 1958. From January 20 to July 15, 1958, the Shanghai Three-Self held the 8th (Enlarged) meeting of its Standing Committee to launch a socialist education movement, with 205 clergy and representatives participating. Many people were criticized, and Lu Chuanfang and others were labelled as Rightists. After Lu Chuanfang 陆传芳 had been labelled, the Ling-Liang Hall would not let him work and gave him no living expenses for a time. He felt unable to explain to his family but went out every day during working hours and spent his time sitting in the library.¹⁶ Following this meeting, the Shanghai Christian socialist education committee was established.

Even the field of religious work had its own “Great Leap Forward.” For example, in August 1958, one province’s Religious Bureau concluded that “religion is the ideology of the bourgeoisie and the most negative factor hindering the development of socialist productive forces at any time. The ultimate goal of [the Party’s] religious work is to eliminate

15 The five were: Zhou Qingze 周清泽 in Fujian, Fan Aishi 范爱侍 in Zhejiang, Liu Lingjiu 刘龄九 in Beijing, Zhou Fuqing 周福庆 of the Shanghai Ling-Liang Hall, and Dong Hongen 董鸿恩 of the Shanghai Evangelize China Fellowship.

16 Cao Shengjie 曹圣洁 and Luo Weihong 罗伟虹, 《曹圣洁口述历史》 (Cao Shengjie: an Oral History) (Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Press, 2016), 83.

religion. The Party's policy of freedom of religious belief is a powerful weapon to unite and fight against religion. It is the weapon of a positive revolution. In order to realize the Great Leap Forward in religious work, we must constantly overcome right-leaning conservative thought, emancipate the mind, and eliminate the four superstitions (the five natures; the dominant role in believer's thinking of the "Heavenly Lord" and "God"; wildly underestimating the political consciousness of the masses; the superstitious belief in the representativeness of the upper classes in religion; superstition about the policy and strategy of religious work).¹⁷ "Except for a few progressives, the vast majority of religious professionals represent the national bourgeoisie and are generally opposed to the Communist Party and socialism."¹⁸

This kind of understanding is to a certain degree representative of the view at that time. Based on such an understanding, in an atmosphere of racing into communism, a working policy of limiting, weakening and promoting the extinction of religion was adopted. In the summer of 1958, while visiting Shanghai, the question He Chengxiang 何成湘, director of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council, had the effrontery to pose to Shen Derong, then deputy secretary-general of the national TSPM, was "Is it possible to create a 'country without religious activities' in China?"¹⁹ He Chengxiang then went on to Wenzhou. In Shen Derong's estimation, the pilot establishment of a "no religion area" in Wenzhou was related to this trip to Shanghai. During the Great Leap Forward, religious circles were called upon to "donate" religious venues, copper, iron and other materials

17 United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, comp. 《统一战线工作》 (United Front Work), No. 41; quoted from He Husheng, 110-111.

18 Ibid., 110.

19 Shen Derong, *50 Years*, 70.

to support socialist construction. Religions in Shanghai donated 100,000 square meters of real estate.²⁰

On August 12, 13 and 15, 1958, a meeting of representatives of Christian co-workers and believers was held in Shanghai, where it was resolved to implement union worship. There was unanimous agreement among the participants, and many clergy said they would comply with the arrangement. After the meeting, preparatory committees for union services were set up in each district. The tasks included: continue to carry out the in-depth socialist education campaign for clergy, carry out union worship by district, and assign clergy. On September 7, the first union service was held in Shanghai. In the autumn of 1958, Shanghai Christians held a second batch of study classes. Almost all church staff took part in the study and gathered in Mu'en Church. Some people were identified as Rightists, including Huang Meili 黄美丽 and Jacob Zhu 朱雅各 of the Shanghai Spiritual Seminary; Gan Xifan 干锡藩, of Beulah Chapel, could not bear the pressure and committed suicide by jumping from a height in the church.²¹ It can be seen that the anti-Rightist struggle in the Christian community took place in tandem with union worship.

“Leftism” did not cease after the introduction of union worship. Beginning in 1958, and especially during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1959, Chen Yiming 陈一鸣, deputy director of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Religious Affairs, was criticized. In the early 1960s, Chen Yiming had been expelled from the Party and transferred to do manual work.²² In 1959, He Chengxiang accompanied

20 *Religion in Shanghai*, 617.

21 Cao Shengjie, 84.

22 Chen Yiming 陈一鸣, 《我的心在高原: 陈一鸣的文集》(My heart is on the high plateau: collected works of Chen Yiming) (Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press, 2014), 20.

Y. T. Wu and other religious leaders to the northwest and southwest on an inspection tour. Because of the impact of the Great Leap Forward on Christianity, Y. T. Wu was highly critical, and seemed to feel he was “standing on the brink of the abyss or walking on thin ice” from time to time. He was also dissatisfied with shortages in the supply of non-staple foodstuffs. Before the inspection tour had ended, He Chengxiang organized criticism of Y.T. Wu in Chongqing.²³ But as luck would have it, the central government prevented it in a timely way and He Chengxiang was transferred from religious work in April 1961.²⁴

In 1960, the CPC Central Committee put forward the policy of “adjusting, consolidating, enriching and improving” in the construction of the national economy, and terminated the Great Leap Forward Campaign. Religious policy relaxed for a time. At the end of 1960 and the beginning of 1961, the Second National Chinese Christian Conference was held, with a so-called “celestials’ meeting” preceding the formal meeting.²⁵ But before long, the left line rose again, turning the nascent correction of the “left” tilt into an anti-“right” tilt. Beginning in October 1962 and for over six months thereafter, the Central United Front Work Department held over 40 ministerial meetings to examine the policies and thinking of Minister Li Weihang 李伟汉, the titular head of religious work. From August to December 1964, the second round of criticism was carried out. The charge was: opposing

23 Shen Derong: *Fifty Years*, 71.

24 Cao Shengjie, 93.

25 The characteristics of a so-called “celestials’ meeting” are, under the leadership of the Party, “three-self” and “three-no”: putting forward problems by themselves, analyzing problems by themselves and solving problems by themselves; not criticizing unsparingly or without grounds, not labelling people, not exploiting others’ weaknesses; [but rather] to open up minds, to speak one’s mind, to seek truth from facts, and to convince people by reason.

the Party, the Central Committee and Chairman Mao, which was embodied in capitulationism to the bourgeoisie, including the belief that “religion can serve socialism.”²⁶ On December 25, Li was removed from the post of minister. Religious policy became increasingly “left.” In June 1965, Xie Fuzhi 谢富治, Minister of Public Security, said publicly that the church was “the landlord party” and “the secret agents of imperialism.”²⁷ During the Cultural Revolution, almost all public religious activities stopped. It is clear that after the implementation of union worship, there was union but not much worship, or none at all. Nor, from the perspective of church life, was there any in-depth experience of union worship.

Changes within the Church Facilitated Union Worship

Fewer believers

The number of church goers and newly baptized believers decreased. In Shanghai, there were 44,000 Christians in 1949; in 1965 the total was down to 36,000. On September 7, 1958, 19,600 believers attended the first union service. In 1961, about 10,100 people came into the church every week, and 153 people were baptized that year.²⁸ The immediate reason for the decline in the number of believers was that after liberation, working people had a sense of having stood up. Fate, which once had seemed uncontrollable, appeared to be controllable, and some people gave up their

26 *Reminiscence and Study*, 884.

27 Religious work in contemporary China: I, 124.

28 Shanghai Tongzhi Compilation Committee, Vol. 14, Shanghai Tongzhi, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, Shanghai Social Sciences Publishing House, 2005, P. 1576.

faith. The anti-America denunciation movement and other movements caused a decline in Christianity's reputation in society. The more direct reason was the discrimination against Christianity, which seriously affected the education and work of young believers. The whole society had thrown itself into the Great Leap Forward, making iron and steel day and night, and fewer people had participated in religious activities.

Clergy felt that the Church had no future, and people lost interest

Most of the clergy believed that in the near future religion would die out and the church no longer exist. After 1956, the weekly church magazine *Tian Feng* 天风 became a monthly. In 1965, publication became irregular. Fewer believers also meant fewer donations. The Church could not make ends meet and it was difficult to maintain it. Most of the younger clergy changed careers willingly. Upon changing careers, one could change one's class attribution from exploiting class to self-supporting. In the factory, no one would struggle against you and that felt good.²⁹

Impediments to union collapsed

In the world of ecumenical Christianity, denominationalism mainly arises due to different understandings of some doctrines, which is reflected in different types of worship and habits in the life of faith. Denominational organizations are related to certain geographical, historical and cultural backgrounds. In China, denominations were mainly introduced through mission agencies, which had nothing to do with China's geographical,

29 Interview with Wu Yinong 吴亦依, June 13, 2018.

historical and cultural background. Some denominational differences were simply due to being classified under different mission agencies or boards, for example the southern Presbyterian Church and the northern Presbyterian Church, which entered China separately and became separate churches. The same was true of the Baptists. Some denominations entered China under the names of their sending agencies, such as the China Inland Mission and the London Mission. Other denominations were simply different groups in the same denomination. For example, the Apostolic Faith Church and the Apostolic Faith Mission (founded in 1907,³⁰ by the American missionary Nettie Moomau (Mu Shude 慕淑德)) were both part of the Pentecostal Church. In 1916, when the church was built in Shanghai, Moomau sent Sheng Yongbao 盛永保 and his wife from Suzhou to Shanghai, and in order to show the difference, the church was called the Apostolic Faith Church. Some “denominations” were churches created by Chinese who were influenced by foreign denominations. Among these were the Christian Assembly, the True Jesus Church and the Jesus Family.

Because the mission societies and denominations had their own channels of support and church property, and the rights and interests that came with them, many denominational disputes in the history of Christianity in China are actually disputes over conflicting interests of different countries, or similar disputes between different groups or individuals. Among the Chinese, the disparities among clergy of different denominations were mainly those of the organizational entities belonging to different missions; differences in doctrine came second. General believers are more likely to join nondenominational church activities nearby on a random basis. Therefore, both liberals and

30 Mission societies are organizations of missionaries sent by Christian churches in Western countries to carry out missionary activities.

fundamentalists in China's Christian community fiercely criticized the negative impact of denominationalism.³¹

In the second half of the 19th century, missionaries in China and Chinese church members began to advocate for and promote unity, and a unity movement was born. First came union of mission societies belonging to the same denomination; second came union of different denominations. The most important organizational achievement was the establishment of the Church of Christ in China in 1927. But unity requires reorganization and distribution of rights and interests, and this became an important obstacle to unity. By 1949, there were still 60 or 70 denominations in China.

With the withdrawal of the missionaries and the severance of funds, the main economic basis for rights and interests no longer existed. The only differences that remained were differences in the understanding of some doctrines, as well as differences in worship and the life of faith. The church leaders who designed and promoted the union services dealt with these types of differences using the principles of improvement, inclusiveness and consideration: "For different worship services, habits and so on, we all think that if some are not in line with the interests of socialism, such as crying and shouting, they should be completely changed; others can be properly taken care of. Most people believe that for the sake of the socialist road, different services and habits can learn from each other

31 This determination follows Chen Yongtao's 陈永涛 view in his talk at the "Faculty Symposium Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of Union Worship in Protestant Churches in China and the 20th Anniversary of Theological Reconstruction" held at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary on December 19, 2018.

and adapt to each other.”³² For the most part, the difficult problems of the past half century were readily solved.

The process of union worship was an irresistible force

In the first half of 1958, union services were first implemented in Zhejiang and the process was quickly echoed by churches in Jiangxi, Heilongjiang and Yunnan. On September 7, union worship was held in Shanghai. At the end of 1958, union worship had basically been implemented in the whole country.

An analysis of the course of the union worship in Shanghai will help us to understand the situation of that year. At the beginning of 1958, Songjiang, Jiading, Baoshan and other counties in Shanghai had not yet been incorporated into Shanghai from Jiangsu. There were 15 districts in Shanghai and three suburbs: eastern, western and northern. There were 296 churches in the Shanghai area. 208 of these were in municipal Shanghai, where there were 48,000 believers and 472 clergy. Following implementation of union worship, 22 larger churches remained of the 208. These churches originally belonged to different denominations. There were also some independent churches and some that belonged to evangelical denominations, such as the West Shanghai Charismatic Assembly of God Jesus Church, the Christian Assembly Independent Church on North Urumqi Road, and the Ling-Liang Church. The 22 churches were distributed throughout 15 districts: 2 districts had 3 churches each; 3 districts each had 2 churches; another 10 districts had 1 church each. There were no churches in the

32 *Tian Feng*, No. 18 (958): 19. See Luo Weihong 罗伟虹, 《中国基督教(新教)史》(History of Christianity (Protestantism) in China) (Shanghai: Shanghai Century Publishing Group, Shanghai People's Publishing House: 2014), 737.

suburbs.³³ After the implementation of union worship, no matter what the church's former denomination, in matters of faith and worship all adhered to the principles of mutual respect and appropriate treatment.

In November of the same year, clergy from Nanhui, Songjiang, Jinshan, Fengxian, Qingpu, Chuansha and Chongming counties took part in the study sessions organized by the Suzhou special district of Jiangsu Province; religious activities were halted. Some were resumed after March 1959. In 1961, there were 60 churches in the city with 39 holding religious activities. In 1958, of the original 472 clergy, 74 remained;³⁴ the rest were transferred, retired, resigned, or joined other work units in church organizations, for instance, gathering historical data, etc. The Shanghai TSPM made up the difference in the reduced income of the transferred workers. In 1961, there were 393 clergy in the city, including 105 who were engaged in religious activities, 95 who were transferred to other industries, 64 who participated in processing in production, 28 engaged in other professions, 66 retirees and 35 people who had been labelled as Rightists.³⁵

The new structure of the Church after the implementation of union worship.

Across the country, there were two modes of union services: one type was the combination of churches of different denominations in one area; the other was the combination of churches of the same denomination in one area. The former was in the majority, while the latter

33 *Religion in Shanghai*, 546-551.

34 *Ibid.*, 546.

35 Shanghai Gazetteer Comp. Committee, 《上海通志》 (Shanghai Gazetteer), Vol. 14, 1575.

approach was limited to Fujian and Guangdong. Shanghai followed the first pattern.

After the implementation of union worship, a new organizational system was established in Protestantism in Shanghai. Following the establishment of the Shanghai TSPM Committee in 1955, Three-Self liaison groups were successively established in each district. In 1958, preparatory committees for union services were established in each district. The churches cut ties with the original denominations and the board of directors and deacons of each church were defunct. Personnel, financial and religious activities were arranged by the Union Worship Preparatory Committee of each district. Throughout the country, when the TSPM was first established, the former denominational organization system was still active. After the grassroots churches of the denominations joined in union worship, all regional and national denominational organizations became impracticable, existing in name only and only a few (Personnel) remained until the Cultural Revolution. That is to say, with the implementation of union worship, the organizational system of Protestant Christianity naturally changed substantially, and the TSPM at all levels became the general external liaison representative of the Church.

Perseverance in and deepening of union worship following reform and opening up

On April 8, 1979, the Centennial Church in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, was the first to resume worship following the [Cultural Revolution]. On September 2, Shanghai Mu'en Church resumed worship. Churches were gradually recovered, restored and opened nationwide from then on. In 1982, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued Document 19: "The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's

Socialist Period,” that restored things to order, brought a new understanding of religious issues and comprehensively implemented the policy of freedom of religious belief. By 1986, 22 churches had been restored in Shanghai following the regional layout; only union worship could be held.

In fact, the church had not really practiced union worship until then and encountered many specific problems. For example, how do people from different denominational backgrounds live religious life together? What kind of church system, what theological point of view, what hymns and liturgy should be used, and how should Christmas be observed? Pastor Dong Yankui 董延奎 of Qingdao described the situation in his church as “one church, three parties and five gangs”, things once reached the point of calling the police to step in.³⁶ In addition,³⁷ various denominational organizations still existed outside China. They contacted their former denominational personnel in China, offering financial support, materials and so on, encouraging the restoration of denominational activities, expanding denominational influence, and even trying to rebuild denominational organizations with support from foreign forces. For a time, Seventh Day Adventists were particularly active. Did the Church want to persevere in union worship? Chinese Protestantism had to repeatedly ponder and choose. This repeated pondering and choosing was most urgent during the 1980s. Overall, [the choice was to] persevere in union worship, and gradually carry it forward, moving toward unity. Today, Protestant Christianity continues on this path.

36 Adventists can also be divided into radicals and moderates; and Christian Assembly as well. In the liturgy at Saint X, there were big chalices and small cups. Interview with pastor Dong Yankui on December 17, 2018.

37 “Working Together: On persevering in Union Worship,” *Tian Feng*, No. 2 (2008): 4.

Reasons Protestant Christians persevered in union worship

The thinking on union worship in Protestant circles can be summed up in the following 5 main reasons.

1) The biblical basis. Unity is frequently mentioned in the Bible. John 17:11 says, "...so that they may be one, as we are one." Although union worship has not yet reached complete unity, it is a great step forward on that road. This step is a crucial step and should be cherished. No one has the right to damage it. True Christians will never go backward, once again falling into denominational disputes. Only by "seek common ground while reserving differences" on the road to unity, can the church avoid abandoning the common ground and creating differences."

2) Conforming to the world trend. The Church ecumenical initiated the movement for unity long ago. The World Council of Churches is not only the movement's organizational achievement, but an important force in promoting it. After decades of effort, united churches have been established in South India, the Netherlands and Canada, and Australia has a uniting church. World denominational Christian organizations attach great importance to opening dialogue with other denominations. Following Vatican II, Catholicism not only entered into dialogue with Protestant Christianity, but also with Islam and the Orthodox Churches. Christian churches in many countries around the world envy our union services. They believe that church practice in China can provide empirical evidence and experience to the movement for unity in the Church ecumenical.

3) Doctrinal differences are not a sufficient or necessary condition for abandoning union worship. Since New Testament times, churches have had theological characteristics. Within the church, people often think that they are the most able to resolve doctrinal issues.

In fact, others also have the basis and practice for thinking they are right. In the 2000-year history of the Church, there have always been those who want to impose their own views on others. They have even resorted to war, but they have not achieved their goals. All sorts of understandings still exist. In contemporary China, to really focus on building a harmonious church, we must strictly implement the principle of mutual respect. We can never resort to “sheep stealing” or attacking others for our own benefit.³⁸ Only by joining together and by uniting can the Church win a good social image such that more people accept Christianity.³⁹

4) The former denominational organizations no longer exist and cannot be revived. The CCC&TSPM has become the only legal group at all levels in the Protestant Christian community that can independently carry out activities. In 1981, Chinese Christian leaders announced that China had entered the post-denominational era.⁴⁰ That is to say, denominations that had functioned as organizations no longer existed, but the diversity of denominational beliefs, theological thinking and liturgy did.⁴¹ After reform and opening up, TSPM first resumed its activities as a patriotic religious organization of the Protestant Christian community; in 1980, the church affairs organization, the

38 That is, instigating members of other churches to leave their church and join another.

39 The first three points are mainly quoted from my paper, “Working Together,” which appeared in *Tian Feng*, No. 2 (2008): 5.

40 On March 24, 1981, Pastor Cai Wenhao 蔡文浩 used the term for the first time when he visited Hong Kong as a representative of the national TSPM. Quoted in Luo Mingjia 罗明嘉, Liu Ruomin 刘若民 and Chen Yongtao 陈永涛, “‘后宗派’基督教可能吗?” (Is ‘post-denominational’ Christianity possible?) in *Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 4 (2015): 20.

41 This summary is quoted from Chen Yilu 陈逸鲁, “中国基督教会合一而多样的历史” (The History of unity and diversity in the Chinese Protestant Church) in *Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 1 (2006): 14.

China Christian Council (CCC) was established. Provinces, cities and counties also restored and established CCC&TSPM at different levels. The Chinese Constitution, as amended in 1982, stipulated for the first time that “religious groups and religious affairs are not subject to the domination of foreign forces.” Document No. 19 raised the issue of resistance to “infiltration,” which was initially directed at mission agencies efforts to “return to the China mainland.”⁴² In 1990, the Chinese government clearly pointed out that “the illegal establishment and development of religious organizations and strongholds in China” constitutes “infiltration.”⁴³ In other words, within the framework of current laws and policies, the former denominational organizations cannot resume their activities. In 1991, the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council and the Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly issued Implementation Measures for the Registration and Administration of Religious Social Organizations. The CCC&TSPM at all levels were registered and operate legally in good order. In fact, this established a new organization system for Protestant Christianity in China. The CCC&TSPM not only function as representatives for external contacts but are also duty bound to undertake the organizing of various activities in the Protestant community.

42 《关于我国社会主义时期宗教问题的基本观点和基本政策》 (Document 19: “The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country’s Socialist Period), compiled by the comprehensive research group of the literature research office of the CPC Central Committee and the Department of Policies and Regulations of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council, in *Selected documents of religious work in the new era*, (Religious Culture Press, 1995), 70.

43 Li Peng李鹏, 《进一步重视关心和做好宗教工作》 (Further stress, care for and do a good job in religious work (Speech at the plenary session of the National Conference on religious work on December 5, 1990); *Selected documents of religious work in the new era*, 195.

5) The personnel, finance and property that the former denominational structure relied upon no longer existed, and there is no way to rebuild it. After reform and opening up, local governments helped the churches to implement policies, and church property was gradually returned, meeting the needs of believers in different regions to carry out religious activities and support themselves. In some areas, the names of churches were also changed to place names. The CCC&TSPM at all levels undertook the responsibility to raise and allocate funds for self-support. Clergy who had belonged to the former denominations returned to the church one after another and were newly assigned to churches and responsibilities. The new generation of clergy trained in seminary are basically non-denominational. Newly baptized believers have a sense of belonging only to their church, with no sense of belonging to a denomination.⁴⁴ That is to say, there is redistribution of church property, overall planning and expenditure of funds, and redefinition of people's ownership. According to the above laws and policies, there is no possibility of legal reconstruction of denominational structures.

The Church's perseverance in and deepening of union worship

Article 3 of the "Constitution of the China Christian Council" states that, "[we advocate] 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

44 Interview with Mr. Yan Xiyu 严锡禹 of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary on December 13, 2018.

bond of peace' in the relationship between the members." ⁴⁵ Although the constitution has been amended several times, this phrasing has not been altered. At every session of the National Chinese Christian Conference, it has been stressed that union worship should be carried out and promoted in a substantive and gradual manner.

On February 16, 1981, the CCC&TSPM held a symposium to discuss many church issues, including when the Preparatory Committee for Union Worship established in 1958 would finish its work? There was a need to make a comprehensive study of worship, articles of faith and denominations. In the summer of that year, CCC&TSPM held a seminar on theological issues to deepen discussion. Beginning in that year, Bishop Zheng Jianye 郑建业, vice-president and director general of the China Christian Council, presided over: the preparation of a curriculum for volunteers, the provision to local churches of a guide for explanation of religious doctrine, preparation of the *Chinese Christian Catechism* 《中国基督教要道问答》 as study material for enquirers prior to baptism and the compilation of *The Hymnal (New Edition)* for use in the churches. These practical measures gradually consolidated the basis in faith tradition and worship for seeking common ground while reserving differences, respecting each other and accepting each other, and providing guidelines to the churches in their practice of union worship.

In 1982, a series of discussions was held in Christian circles on how to run the church well, focusing on Three-Self and union worship. At the Enlarged Joint Meeting of the

45 《中国基督教协会章程》(The Constitution of the China Christian Council), in *Documents of the Third National Chinese Christian Conference* (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 1980), 27. English version in *The China Study Project Journal*, Vol.2, No.1 (April 1987):49. Reprinted by permission in *Chinese Theological Review*, 1987:1.

National CCC&TSPM held in September 1982, Bishop Zheng summed up the achievements of union worship:

- 1) The former denominations no longer displayed their own titles or went their own way.
- 2) The past national and regional organizations of former denominations had virtually ceased their activities and functions; therefore, they were no longer organized in their own systems.
- 3) No denominations carried out activities overseas.
- 4) There was no longer any separate or private printing or copying of denominational publications.
- 5) All Christian groups took part in the TSPM.
- 6) All worked together with other groups in the TSPM in seeking the common ground, reserving minor differences and practicing mutual respect in matters of faith. No group attacked the beliefs and rites of other groups.
- 7) All groups advocated the independence of the Chinese Protestant Church, believers' love of country and love of church, glorifying God and benefitting people.⁴⁶

His summation received general agreement from the members present at the meeting. They believed that these valuable achievements were all achieved under the guidance of the Holy Spirit by "forbearing one another in love and maintaining the bond of peace." These are achievements of our Church in terms of self-government, which are worth cherishing and persevering in. These achievements also became the guidelines for dealing with relationships among various denominational [traditions] in the church ever since.

46 《中国基督教三自爱国运动委员会第三届委员会，中国基督教协会第一届委员会第二次全体（扩大）会议文件》(Documents of the Second Plenary (Enlarged) Meeting of the Third Chinese Christian Patriotic Movement Committee and the First China Christian Council) (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 1982), 59.

The Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference, held in August 1986, had the most in-depth discussion on union worship to date. The CCC&TSPM work report affirmed the

Achievements of union worship, expressed the determination to consolidate these achievements and pointed out that union worship is in line with the Bible truth of 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God,' and also moves us towards the goal [expressed in]the prayer for complete unity our Lord Jesus prayed for his disciples before his death. We should treasure and strive to consolidate this unity based on love of country and love of church. We should strengthen the unity of all believers, both inside and outside the church, and guard against and resist the hostile forces from overseas in any attempt to sow discord within the church, manufacture attempts to split our church, and overcome any tendency to be at odds with leadership. We should continue to implement the principle of mutual respect and consultation, incorporate the fine traditions of various denominations and uphold and advance the cause of church unity. The time when those in the church who held different theological views would attack each other is over and gone.⁴⁷

During the speeches, Shi Zesheng 石泽生, secretary-general of the Beijing Christian Affairs Committee, Wang Enbo 王恩波, deputy secretary-general of the Fujian Christian Council, Ren Zhongxiang 仁钟祥, vice-chair of the Shanghai Christian Affairs Committee, and Liu Qingfen 刘清芬, chairman of the Tianjin TSPM, introduced their experiences of union worship being held in good order; how, in the spirit of unity and through years of practice in the church, all forms of baptism and Holy Communion

47 《中国基督教三自爱国运动委员会第三届中国基督教协会第一届常务委员会工作报告 (August 16,1986)》 (Report on the work of the Third TSPM Committee and the First China Christian Council (August 16, 1986) *Special Issue on the Fourth National China Christian Conference* (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 1986), 30-31.

were tolerated and held; the humility rite and other special rites could be carried out, and the holding of worship and festivals held on different dates was respected.

Addressing some of the outstanding issues of the time, Bishop K. H. Ting pointed the direction for further efforts in his closing sermon at the Conference:

In matters of faith and worship, we must not force the minority to follow the majority; we urge the majority to care for the minority. But we also hope that any minority will not neglect to recognize, with thankful hearts, that Christians of other backgrounds have also been redeemed by Christ, that our faith is basically the same, and that we have all received our common faith from Jesus Christ himself. To ignore this commonality, which unites us and to dwell only on differences, that is, to magnify minor characteristics so as to overshadow what unites us, is a denial of the work of Christ, a departure from Paul's teaching, and a division of the body of Christ.⁴⁸

Even more importantly, the meeting put the establishment of a church order on the agenda, and took a further step on the road to unity. The CCC&TSPM work report pointed out that

It is a great and good thing that the situation of a divided house and mutual antagonism in the church is basically in the past, but at the same time as we have eliminated denominationalism, we have brought about a situation in which there is a lack of a proper order, rules and regulations for the church in China, which sometimes leads to confusion and provides an advantage to troublemakers. It occasionally happens that, due to the lack of guidance, the church staff manage the church in an inappropriate way. At

48 K. H. Ting 丁光训, “教会要在爱中建立自己” (Building Up the Body in Love), in *Love Never Ends*, 256.

present, some provincial and municipal CCC&TSPM's have begun to draw up and try out some regulations acceptable to all on the admission of believers for baptism (or immersion), also some liturgical language for use in the examination and ordination of ministers, elders, and deacons, for baptism, Holy Communion and so on. These are all gratifying attempts. How can the Chinese Church explore and test out the a church order so it not only conforms to China's national conditions and the actual situation of the Chinese Church, but also continue to thoroughly implement the principle of mutual respect in faith, making church life rich and varied, as well as acceptable to the majority of co-workers. This is a great and significant task. We must offer constant prayer and unremitting efforts to achieve it, before we can gain new accomplishments in governing the church better.⁴⁹

In 1987, the CCC&TSPM officially launched the establishment of a church order.

In 1988, the church took another step toward unity on the path of union worship and consecrated two bishops, Sun Yanli 孙彦理 and Shen Yifan 沈以藩, in Shanghai. Bishop Ting pointed out:

Some tried to understand the step we are taking as a restoration of denominationalism, particularly the restoration of Anglican denomination. No, this is not the case. We practice the breaking of bread, but this is not the restoration of the Little Flock. We honor the Sabbath Day and practice the humility rite, but this is for implementing our principle of mutual respect in matters of faith and worship so as to insure our unity. ... This much is clear: We will have bishops, but we are not choosing the episcopal system of church government. Our bishops are not diocesan and not administrative; they have their authority, but their authority does not base itself on any written constitutional stipulation

49 Note 47, 26.

or on any executive position, but on their spiritual, moral, theological, and pastoral administration, on their service to others.⁵⁰

In order to embody the spirit of church oneness and avoid any hint of denominational restoration, seven representatives from different denominational backgrounds jointly consecrated the two bishops. Four of the seven were originally Anglican (episcopal system): K. H. Ting, Xue Pingxi 薛平西, Wang Shenyin 王神荫, Mao Kezhong 毛克忠, one Baptist (congregational system): Qi Qingcai 戚庆才, two from Church of Christ in China (presbyterian system): Wu Gaozi 吴高梓, Yin Jizeng 殷继增 (a graduate of the evangelical North China Theological Seminary, who had worked in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Since 1950, he had been a pastor in the independent Church of Christ in China at West Drum Tower). These two bishops were well and peaceably accepted by clergy and believers, and made the system of ministry in the church more complete.

From December 1, 1991 to January 6, 1992, the Fifth National Chinese Christian Conference distributed the Church Order for Trial Use adopted by the previous Joint Standing Committees of the CCC&TSPM. Bishop Ting pointed out the historical significance and value of the Order: "This is the result of several years' repeated consultation and revision by Rev. Peter Cai Wenhao and other colleagues. I dare say that this is another important document of our TSPM and a crystallization of its 40 years. Looking back over the years, this document will probably be regarded as very preliminary and inadequate. However, today, it fully embodies the principle of mutual respect in faith and liturgy, especially in terms of ecclesiology, and it also reflects

50 Ting, "走出一条新路来," (Taking a New Way) in *Love Never Ends*, 308, 309.

the highest point we could and have achieved on the road toward unity in the past 40 years.”⁵¹ After several years of trial and revision, at the end of 1996, the Chinese Christian Church Order was officially adopted.

In 1991, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Notice on Further Doing a Good Job Concerning Several Issues in Religious Work, and the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council and the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the Measures for the Implementation of the Administration of the Registration of Religious Social Organizations to strengthen the administration of religious affairs. The CCC&TSPM began to give greater consideration to the issue of uniting believers in private meeting points, especially those influenced by overseas interests and which included those with beliefs reflecting different denominational backgrounds. In 1994, at a retreat for the Baptist World Alliance in Nanjing, Bishop Ting pointed out: “The so-called China Ministries in Hong Kong and abroad boast of providing secret financial backing. They are doing their utmost to foster the spirit of division among Chinese Protestants.”⁵² ... “There is at least one group abroad that is trying to restore an old denomination in China. We are glad that so far our unity is strong enough to withstand the pulls from abroad.”⁵³ He stated that the “policy of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement is to broaden Christian unity through our indiscriminating services to all Christian groups and through our search for reconciliation and fellowship wherever that is called for.”⁵⁴

51 Ting, “闭幕词” (Closing speech), in *Special Issue on the Fifth NCCC* (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 1992), 57-58.

52 Ting, “我们正在怎么样办好教会” (An update on the church in China), in *Love Never Ends*, 452.

53 *Ibid.*, 449.

54 *Ibid.*, 452.

In the 1990s, the former Seventh Day Adventist Church, the True Jesus Church and a small number of people in the Christian Assembly again raised the issue of restoring denominations. Han Wenzao, president of the CCC, quoted a popular Chinese saying, “hardship is easy to share, but wealth is difficult,” to describe the increase in disputes within the church.⁵⁵ The church once again reflected and made a choice. On March 21, 1998, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary held a seminar on “Unity in the Chinese Protestant Church” which was representative. The seminar pointed out that the unity of the church in China has a political, organizational and emotional basis; the Chinese Church should practice mutual tolerance out of love, connect with each other through peace, seek a basis of faith and theology, and establish an ecclesiology that not only inherits the church tradition but is also in keeping with the actual situation of the Chinese Church.⁵⁶

On the whole, Christianity in China has persevered in union worship and gradually moved towards unity. In 2014, on behalf of the two sessions of the National People’s Congress, Fu Xianwei 傅先伟, Chairman of the TSPM, delivered the opening speech at the “Symposium Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Committee and the Sinicization of Christianity.” He took union worship as one of the six major achievements of TSPM in the past 60 years and stressed the direction of unity. “In the 1950s, following the biblical teaching to ‘be one,’ TSPM advocated

55 Han Wenzao 韩文藻, “同心协力建立基督的身体—闭幕礼拜上的讲道” (Closing sermon—work together with one heart to build the body of Christ), in *Special Issue on Sixth NCCC* (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 1996), 98.

56 Zhang Yan 张艳, “为中国教会的合一而努力—记‘中国教会的合一’研讨会” (Strive for the unity of the Chinese Church: Seminar on the unity of the Chinese Church), in *Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 2 (1998): 43.

the principle of mutual respect in matters of faith and led believers to union worship, bringing to an end the plethora of denominations in Chinese Protestant Christianity, along with that fragmented and divisive situation. Moreover, since the 1980s, it has worked with the CCC to propel Protestant churches into the post-denominational era, speed up progress toward Church unity, and make it a creative witness in the Church ecumenical.”⁵⁷

In 2018, the CCC&TSPM launched the “Five Year Outline Plan to Promote the Contextualization of Protestant Christianity in China (2018-2022),” which pointed out that “the goal of contextualization is the establishment of a Church that exalts Christ and maintains unity.”⁵⁸ In the same year, the Tenth NCCC adopted the newly revised Church Order of Protestant Churches in China, which once again stressed that “the Chinese Church maintains a unified form of worship,” [Article 11] and also pointed out that “the Chinese Church should build itself up in love, one in Christ” [Article 9]. Clearly, on the basis of adhering to union worship, building a church of “unity” has gradually been put on the agenda.

57 Fu Xianwei傅先伟, 《纪念中国基督教三自爱国运动委员会成立60周年暨基督教中国化研讨会开幕词》(Commemorating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Committee and the Sinicization of Christianity), <http://www.ccctspm.org/cppccinfo/9683>, accessed on December 17, 2018. [English translation in *Chinese Theological Review*: 26, 54-63.]

58 《推进我国基督教中国化五年工作规划纲要(2018-2022)》(Five year outline plan to promote the Contextualization of Christianity in China (2018-2022)), <http://www.ccctspm.org/cppccinfo/10283>, accessed on December 17, 2018. [English translation in *Chinese Theological Review*: 29, 6-26].

Further thoughts on union worship

Today, the practice of union worship in China has been sustained over 60 years, a cycle spanning two generations. It has been more than 40 years since reform and opening up began. In the Three-Self system, newly baptized believers do not have denominations to choose among, and the concept of denominations is gradually disappearing. With the departure of the older generation of pastors and believers, the will to restore denominations has gradually faded. Today, China is a great country with complete sovereignty under the unified leadership of the Communist Party of China. It is not only legal, but also in line with national and religious conditions to persevere in union worship and build a “united” church. But there are two issues to consider.

Uniting with those in private meeting points and the issues of denominationalism they raise.

Article 35 of the 2018 (revised) Regulation on Religious Affairs stipulates:

Where citizens with religious belief need to carry out regular collective religious activities, but do not yet meet the conditions for applying to establish a religious venue, the representative of such citizens shall submit an application to the religious affairs department of the people’s government at the county level. The said department may, after consulting with local religious bodies and the local township people’s government, designate a temporary place for them to conduct such activities.

Under the guidance of the religious affairs department of the people’s government at the county level, the local township people’s government shall oversee the religious activities conducted at the temporary place. When conditions for establishing a religious venue are met, the relevant procedures for approval and registration shall be followed.

This provides a convenient door in policy to uniting with believers in private meeting points. After the implementation of the regulations, the registration of private Christian meeting points will be conditionally open.

The situation of private meeting points is complex, some of which are related to overseas denominational organizations and have denominational backgrounds. After such places are registered, Protestant Christianity in China will again face local denominational problems. However, this author predicts that according to the principle that religious affairs in China may not be dominated by foreign forces, there is little room for these denominations with overseas backgrounds to join together to carry out denominational activities as a whole. The administration department will not, in registering private meeting points, allow overseas Christian forces to influence or even to partially influence Christianity in China. The registration process will certainly emphasize the principle of union worship, including no highlighting of the denominational name or organizing activities, no private self-printing of publications, no independent activities aimed at foreign countries, no spiritually based attacks on others' beliefs and liturgical traditions, etc.; nor will [the group] be allowed to form or have the possibility to form a material basis for denominationalism. In recent months, in order to avoid registration, some private meeting points are fragmenting into "groups" and moving away from having an organization. That is to say, no matter whether [such] meeting points are registered or not, in the future, the degree of denominational organization may decline.

In some areas, there are many believers in private meeting points, all different denominations. After registration, will the churches in these areas join with those larger denominations? This author predicts that they will not. The 2018 case of the Catholic Diocese of Eastern Fujian is relevant here.

Future prospects of union worship — the establishment of a United Church

In fact, Christianity in China has been on the path to building a united church since the implementation of reform and opening up.

In 1989, Bishop Shen Yifan recalled: “When the churches of Shanghai united in 1958, all districts set up a Preparatory Committee for Union Worship, hoping that through a period of preparation, a church system for union worship could be formally established. This hope was never realized.”⁵⁹ This author believes that the main reason for the failure of this hope was that the church was not able to implement normal activities due to leftist influence.

The establishment of the China Christian Council in 1980 reflected the desire to gradually establish a United Church. In August 1986, Rev. Wang Weifan 汪维藩, assistant dean of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, delivered a speech at the Fourth NCCC, entitled “Building Ourselves Up in Love,” in which he said, “It is a historical necessity for the development of the TSPM to establish a Chinese Church with Chinese characteristics in harmony with Chinese socialism. If it is the first half of our chapter to strive for the autonomy, self-support and self-propagation of the Chinese Protestant Church from control and exploitation of the West, then the second half is that under new historical conditions we strive to make the Chinese Protestant Church well governed, well supported and well propagated ... on this point of establishing the Church, CCC&TSPM have a common mission.”⁶⁰

59 Shen Yifan 沈以藩, “谈谈理顺关系的问题” (On re-ordering the relationship), in *Anthology of works from the TSPM (1950-1992)* (Shanghai: TSPM, 1993), 310.

60 Wang Weifan 汪维藩, “在爱中建立自己 (Building Ourselves Up in Love),” *Special issue of Fourth NCCC*, 179-180.

From 1987 to 2018, the process through which the CCC&TSPM formulated and revised the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China, actually became a process of consultation, analysis and consensus building. This process is in step with the building of a united church. In the first chapter of The Church Order for Trial Use (1991) adopted in 1991: the “Church”, and the basic components of the Church such as believers, sacraments, ministry, and the organization and management of churches (meeting points) are specified. In 1994, Bishop Ting explained to church circles at home and abroad at the retreat of the Baptist World Alliance:

The China Christian Council is the organizational and ecclesial expression of our post-denominational unit. It is different from any national council of churches in that we do not anymore have denominational churches to form such a council. Yet, it is not the United Church of Christ in China because there are Christians of certain backgrounds who are not ready to go that far. The Little Flock, for instance, interprets the priesthood of all believers in such a way that a church, in order to be a church, must be local and local only. This makes it impossible for them to enter a body which is organized as the church regionally and nationally. A few years ago we had to decide either to go ahead and form the United Church of Christ in China without the Little Flock and one or two similar church groups, or not to go ahead and remain at the lower level of post-denominational unity by keeping these church groups within the fold of the China Christian Council. The second course was what we decided to take, to the satisfaction of most Protestant groups. There are some who want to move forward faster and express disappointment. We are very happy to have such a situation of unity. This is closer to Christ’s prayer that we be one.⁶¹

61 Ting, “Update on the Church in China,” 448.

The Church Order of Protestant Churches in China adopted in 2008 greatly revised the 1996 version and added a chapter on “Faith.” In preparation for this chapter, a CCC&TSPM Committee on Church Order met, as well as some faculty at NJUTS, and representatives of the CCC and TSPM from all provinces, autonomous regions, and directly administered cities held symposia. Some persons were sent to Shanghai, Beijing, Fujian, Zhejiang and other places to hear the opinions of those from various denominational backgrounds. Approximately 200 people attended discussions, and the text underwent over five revisions. The final Chapter expressed a common faith that could be accepted by all. Though only a broad statement, it was fundamental and major, but not the entirety of the Christian faith. It reads, “[The Chinese Church] takes the contents of the entire Bible, the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed as the foundation of our faith”⁶²; it includes 9 fundamental points, the Trinity, creation, redemption, the Holy Spirit, ecclesiology, biblical interpretation, the doctrine of man, eschatology, Christian ethical responsibility. At present, differences in faith traditions and liturgy based on denominational background have not disappeared, but there is a common understanding: [The China Christian Council] 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.”⁶³ This gives the United Church its soul.

The Church Order of Protestant Churches in China passed in 2018 is a big step forward on the road to

62 《中国基督教教会规章》(Church Order of Protestant Churches in China) (Shanghai: CCCTSPM, 2011), 2.

63 《中国基督教协会章程》(Constitution of the China Christian Council), *Third NCCC Documents*, 27.

establishing a United Church. The 2018 Order has newly added chapters including “The Life of the Church,” “Charities,” “Seminaries and Bible Colleges,” and “Discipline,” making the regulations more complete and workable, and further consolidating the foundation to establish a Chinese Church with Chinese characteristics. More importantly, Article 3 announces very clearly to the whole world: “The Chinese Church is a uniting church, implementing the governing mode of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council,” pointing out for the first time that the direction is toward the establishment of a United Church, clarifying the Church’s status as being on the way to establishing a United Church, and stipulates its mode of governance.

Article 4 stipulates: “The responsibilities of the CCC&TSPM vis à vis the CCC&TSPM organizations in the various provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities include service, guidance, regulation and supervision. Local CCC&TSPM organizations, churches and meeting points have a duty to observe this Order.” This article complements Article 3, not only endowing the national CCC&TSPM with the power of administration over churches in different regions, but also stipulates the extent of that administration.

Article 11 indicates that the practice of union worship is the aim: every effort made to preserve the unity of heart received from the Holy Spirit, striving to “become completely one.”⁶⁴ In my opinion, this is the establishment of the United Church.

To sum up, union worship, which began in 1958, persevered in since reform and opening up, practiced and deepened, a Chinese Church with Chinese characteristics has gradually improved and all the elements for the

64 《中国基督教教会规章》(Church Order of Protestant Churches in China), Document 3, Tenth NCCC, November 2018.

establishment of the United Church have gradually come into place. The extension of this process is a predictor that when the time is right, the United Church will be born. And once born, then named.

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The Historical Path to Unity in Chinese Protestantism (2)*

中国基督教合一的历史进程(续)

DUAN QI 段琦

In 1958, a variety of factors prompted various Christian denominations in China to merge, establishing a non-denominational Chinese Christian Church that came to be known for being at the forefront of the world's Christian churches, advancing the Chinese Church into a "post-denominational era." That the Chinese Church was able to reach this point is closely related to the inclusiveness of Chinese culture, the relatively young character of the Protestant Christian Church in China and the weakness of denominationalism in China. As K.H. Ting put it, "We in China did reproduce many of the denominations in Western countries. But, after all, denominational history was short in China, denominationalism remained largely alien and Chinese Christians' denominational loyalty was weak. Thus, we could leave denominations behind without too much difficulty, especially under circumstances not favorable to the proliferation of organizations that were not too different to begin with."¹

* Part 2 of a two-part conference paper. Part 1 focuses on unification and independent church movements in earlier decades. The first section here serves as the opening of Part 1. [-ed.]

1 K. H. Ting 丁光训, "中国基督徒怎么样看待圣经" (Chinese Christians' approach to the Bible), in *Theological Writings from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (1952-1992)* (Nanjing: NJUTS, 1992), 94. English original in *Love Never Ends*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 389.

In fact, some theologians of the older generation, like Jia Yuming 贾玉铭 predicted early on in 1921 that, based on the characteristics of Chinese culture, with regard to Christian church unity, the Chinese Church would be at the forefront. “Chinese view the elements of religions as similar. Take the doctrines of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, though they are utterly different, nevertheless, in the end, they can be reconciled and brought together. Such harmoniousness is not without significance for the future of the Chinese Protestant Church,” and he predicted: “In the future when our Lord’s sheep have ‘become one flock,’ it will have begun with us in China and our Chinese Protestant Church will be the harbinger of unity.”²

Xie Fuya 谢扶雅 brought Chinese culture into the equation and then gave an excellent elucidation of the method for implementing church unity: Western Christianity was receptive to the prompting of Western exclusivity, resulting in competing and incompatible denominations and sects. Chinese Confucianists believed in the “Great Harmony.” Great harmony does not equal unity or uniformity. In “great harmony with small differences” (datong xiaoyi 大同小异) [essentially the same, with minor differences-ed.] one is fully aware that “great harmony” must be connected to “minor differences.” We do not use these “minor differences” to destroy “great harmony”; but neither do we use the “great” harmony to swallow up all else.”³

The predictions of the older generation of theologians are all spoken of as prophetic in the Christian Church of China today.

2 Jia Yuming 贾玉铭, 《神道学》(Religion), quoted in Wang Weifan 汪维藩, “中国教会神学思考之特色, (Characteristics of Chinese Theological Thinking) in *Theological Writings from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary* (1952-1992) (Nanjing: NJUTS, 1992), 94.

3 Xie Fuya 谢扶雅, 《巨流点滴: 历史综合时期》(Drops in the stream: A comprehensive historical era), quoted in Wang Weifan, 94-95.

If we regard the indigenization movement launched in the 1920s as the first unification movement of the Christian Church in China, then the merger of denominations realized in 1958 under the influence of the TSPM after the founding of new China can be regarded as the second unification movement. The difference between this movement and that of the 1920s is that it added new elements, especially political factors, onto the foundation laid by the previous movement.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the unification of churches in the 1950s

The Three-Self Reform (Patriotic) Movement and the Three Self Patriotic Committee partially replaced former functions of the National Christian Council of China.

Although Chinese Christianity had been seeking indigenization prior to the founding of new China, it had always been a “foreign religion” in the eyes of ordinary Chinese people. Before the founding of new China and in its early years, many people in the church opposed the Communist Party and new China. After the nation’s founding, the first thing was to bring an end to the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Of course, the existence of a Christian Church closely related to imperialism could not be allowed. Therefore, to sever the relationship with imperialism and achieve “Three-Self” became the most important measure of the Chinese Christian Church’s conformity to social development. How could Chinese Christianity survive under such conditions? The only way was to take the “Three-Self” path.

With inspiration from Zhou Enlai 周恩来, Y. T. Wu 吴耀宗 (Wu Yaozong) and 40 other church leaders in late

July 1950, issued the “Three-Self Manifesto” (or “Christian Manifesto”) to Christians in China, putting forward the general task, basic policies and specific methods for the reform of the church, unveiling the Three-Self Reform (Patriotic) Movement. There was an enthusiastic response from Christians nationwide.

In October 1950, with the support of the government, the National Christian Council of China [中国基督教协进会, founded 1922] held its 14th annual meeting, one completely presided over and attended by Chinese believers, the first recorded annual meeting of the Council at which no foreign missionaries were present. All Christian church organizations in the country sent representatives, including 140 guests, to attend. The meeting also had the largest number of denominations and sects in attendance than any annual meeting of the Council preceding it. The Conference theme was “The Gospel of Christ and the Church Today.” Its discussions focused on how the church could realize Three-Self and the reform of the Council itself. It determined to complete the tasks of self-government, self-support and self-propagation within five years, and thoroughly sever its relationship with imperialism. At the meeting, Y. T. Wu and others were elected as leading members of the Council.

In December 1950, Chinese assets in the United States were frozen by the US because of China’s Resist America, Aid Korea policy. Those most affected by this were church groups, church schools and hospitals that relied on American financial aid. The Chinese government also adopted corresponding policies. The US attempt to force the Chinese church into submission by withholding economic resources aroused the indignation of the majority of Christians. They supported the corresponding policies adopted by the Chinese government, more clearly recognized the relationship between Western missionaries and imperialism, and thus more actively engaged in the TSPM. Beginning in

1951, many Christian groups not only declared that they would not accept subsidies from the United States, but also that they would not accept subsidies from of any kind from any foreign countries. In the first week of that year, more than 10,000 signed the “Three-Self Manifesto” in response.

This United States action forced the Chinese Protestant Church to move up its plans for self-support. In order to help the Chinese Church solve this problem, the People’s Government held a “meeting on handling Christian groups receiving American subsidies” in April 1951. To help tide the church over this difficulty, the government announced that city churches would be exempted from real estate taxes. This also strengthened the determination of Chinese Christians to take the Three-Self road. The meeting adopted the “Three-Self Manifesto”, calling on Christians to sever their ties with Western missionaries forever, realize Three-Self and enthusiastically support the movement to resist the US and aid Korea, and put together a Chinese Christians Resisting the US and Aiding Korea Three-Self Reform Movement Committee (Preparatory Committee) with Y. T. Wu as chair. Shortly after, under this committee’s leadership, the church launched a campaign to denounce American imperialism and American missionaries (the Denunciation Campaign), which enabled believers to get a clearer understanding of the relationship between missionaries and imperialism and strengthened their patriotic stand. In July 1954, due to the development of the situation, the Chinese Church held a national conference, at which the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee was formally established, also with Y. T. Wu as chairman. In the establishment process of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee (TSPM), we can see that this organization actually replaced the role held by the National Christian Council of China prior to the founding of new China. Not only that, it had to a certain extent a greater role than that

Council, because it had government support and had cut ties with all foreign missions.

The author understands from oral history that from the launch of the Three-Self Movement in 1950, to the establishment of the Three-Self Preparatory Committee in 1951, to the formal establishment of the (National) Three-Self Patriotic Committee in 1954, the Three-Self organizations went through a process from decentralization to centralization, that is, from various denominations in a decentralized Three-Self organization it developed into a unified Three-Self organization. As soon as the Three-Self Patriotic Association was unified, it often gathered the main leaders of various denominations together for political study. As a result, the church leaders of various denominations established closer ties than ever before, enhanced mutual knowledge and understanding, greatly eliminated the preconceived ideas among various denominations, and objectively paved the way for a future unified church.

*The Merger of Seminaries and Bible Colleges.*⁴

When the Chinese Church broke off economic ties with Western missionaries, it had a great impact on Chinese seminaries. Before the founding of new China, these seminaries relied on the aid of mission agencies, and a large proportion of the teaching staff of seminaries were missionaries; their withdrawal had a great impact on theological education. More importantly, negative views on religion after the founding of new China led to the phenomenon that no one was willing to study theology and seminaries also lost a lot of their current students.

4 See Gu Mengfei 顾梦飞, “中国基督教联合礼拜” (United Worship in Chinese Christianity), MA thesis, Religion Department, Beijing University, 2004.

Therefore, facing the serious shortage of qualified teachers, students and finances, merger was the only way out. At that time, the regular universities were also making adjustments to their departments, so it was logical that theological colleges adjusted and merged.

Three main seminaries were established in the merger, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NJUTS), created from Nanjing Seminary (including Jinling Women's Seminary), and encompassing the other 10 seminaries and Bible colleges in East China. In 1962, Yanjing Union Theological Seminary was also merged with NJUTS.

Yanjing Union Theological Seminary was founded on the original School of Religion at Yanjing University. In 1953, it included Peking Theological Seminary and United Women's Holy Word College. Another, Chongqing Theological Seminary, catered to students from various denominations in Southwest China. By 1956, 11 theological seminaries had joined the merger.

Chinese theological schools can be categorized on the basis of two types of theology: modernism and fundamentalism. This situation had to be taken into account following the merger of seminaries. As a result, some seminaries, such as NJUTS, had two courses of study, according to theological interpretation: one for modernist students and one for fundamentalist students. These two schools were also to be found among teaching staff: modernist and fundamentalist. Students could choose either path. Generally speaking, at the time, teachers and students of the theological seminary respected each other, reflecting a spirit of unity.

The effects of the ultra-leftism of the mid to late 1950s meant the church had no choice but to unify.

1 After the founding of new China, the number of believers decreased sharply.

The reason for this phenomenon was closely related to the views on religion after the founding of new China. Y. T. Wu recognized this problem quite early on. In 1950, he said, "The relationship between Christianity and imperialism is the most important problem in Christianity's foreign relations, and the most important factor in Christianity's difficulties after the founding of new China." "Christianity is a foreign religion, an imperialist tool; it is superstitious and anti-scientific; it is the opium of the people. This is what ordinary people, especially those with a materialist education, think about Christianity."⁵ This view caused people to view religious believers as backward elements. In addition, various [political] campaigns caused many young believers to quit Christianity.

A great deal of political study took place following the founding of the People's Republic of China, putting in extra shifts or time was a common occurrence. During the Great Leap Forward period in 1958, the whole nation was engaged in steel smelting. Even if there were no believers who had not withdrawn from the church, they seldom had time to participate in church activities.

The great reduction in the number of believers meant many churches were practically empty, which directly affected donations. Many could not afford normal expenses such as water and electricity, let alone clergy salaries.

2 Views on religion also directly affected how to designate the status of clergy.

When the PRC was founded, clergy were generally regarded as feudal and superstitious and there was great prejudice

5 Wu Yaozong (Y.T. Wu) 吴耀宗, "展开基督教革新运动的旗帜"(Unfurl the banner of the Christian Reform Movement), *Tian Feng* 天风, (Jan. 30, 1951) .

against their work. They were considered to be in need of socialist reformation to make them into self-supporting workers. From the second half of 1957 to 1958, the whole country's clergy and church workers were generally gathered together to study socialism. One important topic was whether they belonged to the exploitative class who lived off the fruits of others' toil. One can well imagine the conclusion of the discussion. Following this study, a large number of church staff were assigned to factories or farms. A group from the church in Shanghai were "sent down" to a clock factory, furniture factory, etc. A group of clergy in Beijing were sent to work on farms in the eastern suburbs.

In addition, during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, a large number of clergy were labelled as Rightists. Of the over 100 clergy in Beijing, more than 40 became Rightists; one-third of the total. A number of leading figures among them were beaten for being Rightists and sent to labor on Nanyuan Farm. One of those beaten was Chen Chonggui 陈崇桂, an important church leader. If not for the fact that Premier Zhou protected him, even Y. T. Wu would not have escaped.

3 During the socialist education movement, the church became more and more "left." During the socialist study mentioned above, many places proposed to rectify the church and to eliminate chaos within the church, in order to purify it.⁶

In order to purify the church, churches in various places imposed restrictive qualifications for the reception of believers. For example, prior to baptism, the Shenyang church carried out "a detailed investigation into the political situation of each person seeking to be baptized, so as not

6 See Gu Mengfei.

to allow bad elements into the church.”⁷ According to the regulations of the Northeast Conference of the Christian Church and the Southern Liaoning Council, bad elements, those dissatisfied with socialism, and various criminals, would not be accepted. The church in Guizhou decided not to admit people of unclear political outlook into the church.

At the same time, church personnel matters were to be adjusted and new elections held for the church council. In Jiangsu the church demanded “rectification of the church organization and personnel to change the situation in which counter-revolutionaries, landlords, rich peasants, right-wing elements, bad elements, free preachers and all those who create chaos and make use of the church have control.”⁸ In church ministries, local churches also required that there be no faith healing or exorcisms, no singing of negative, pessimistic, and worldly-weary hymns, and no negative, pessimistic and worldly-weary witnesses. Preachers should integrate politics with preaching, not allow free preaching, and thoroughly eliminate chaotic phenomena. Shenyang even renamed the Seventh Day Adventist Church as the Christian Sabbath Church to avoid “bad elements using the word ‘Adventist’ to spread rumors.” The pastors’ sermons at various churches became more and more politicized, and this led to further loss of believers.

A large number of believers were lost, and a large number of pastors and staff were “sent down” to work in the countryside. Many churches had few worshippers on Sunday. Most churches in Shanghai had only a few dozen. More than

7 “沈阳市同道订出爱国运动跃进决心书”(Shenyang city believers draft resolution on the leap forward of the patriotic movement), *Tian Feng* 天风 No. 549 (March 31, 1958).

8 “江苏省三自爱国代表会议关于消灭混乱现象和一切非法违法活动的倡议书”(Jiangsu provincial Three-Self Patriotic Council Proposal re putting an end to chaotic phenomena and all illegal activities), *Tian Feng* 天风 No. 553 (June 2, 1958).

a dozen churches in Beijing had none. Over 20 churches had fewer than 20. Fewer than 500 believers regularly attended church in the city.⁹ The church's economic difficulties became more and more serious. A large number of vacant buildings had to be maintained and taxes paid. The church also had to bear the maintenance of idle pastors. Most churches were unable to bear these financial burdens, let alone sustain them over the long run. In this situation, church merger and joint worship services were the best choice.

*The Church's Great Union*¹⁰

The foregoing discussion has presented all the reasons that eventually led to church union. In 1958, in its spring and summer issue, *Tian Feng* 天风 printed a succession of letters from readers, on topics such as "whether denominations should remain intact," "denominations should be appropriately changed," and "church offices in Shanghai can work jointly." The idea of Church union was put forward as a way to save manpower and material resources and support other church ministries or socialist construction.

Three-Self Patriotic Associations and some denominations in Ningbo, Wenzhou and other places took action at this time. Beginning in March 1958, the Three-Self Patriotic Association of Ningbo proposed "merging existing preaching centers and home gatherings to gather together in churches,"¹¹ and soon proposed to merge churches, merge some churches with few believers into adjacent churches,

9 Shen Derong 沈德溶, 《在三自工作五十年》 (50 years of working at Three-Self) (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 2000) 43.

10 For some of the material in this section, see Gu Mengfei.

11 "在政治, 思想, 生产上的跃进规划" (Plan for Leaping Forward in politics, thinking and production), *Tian Feng* 天风, No. 549 (March 31, 1958).

and make overall arrangements for the clergy, etc., drawing a response from all churches. The 271 churches and meeting points in Ningbo City merged into 20, while 24 churches in greater Ningbo merged into 4, and later, into one.¹²

In April 1958, the Ledong District of the Wenzhou Diocese of the Methodist Church decided to merge the churches within Wuli Road, reducing the number of Sunday volunteers. The 26 churches in Zhenhai county also united according to their regions.¹³

In May, Wenzhou Church decided to merge and made specific arrangements for the organization, ministry and system of the merged church: abolishing the former denominational name; unifying personnel, economic and organizational forms; locating the merged church based on the principle of ease of access; following the principle of mutual respect in terms of faith, freedom in baptism (sprinkling and immersion), head coverings and Sabbath observance; Communion was held once a month and the use of multiple cups was advocated. After preparation, Wenzhou Church began union worship on the first day of July.¹⁴

The TSPM saw this situation and took advantage of it to raise the issue of religious denominations to a political level. For example, in July and August, *Tian Feng* published two articles "On denominational issues," and "Thoroughly changing the semi-colonial face of Christianity in China," pointing out that the denominational issue "is not a matter of faith, but a problem of awareness." "The overall purpose of these systems and rites is to serve the interests of capitalism

12 Xu Changcheng 徐畅成, "基督教在宁波的轨迹" (The track of Christianity in Ningbo), *Religion 宗教*, No.18: 107.

13 Tsai, Peter Wenhao 菜文浩, "浙江教会在前进中" (The church in Zhejiang moving forward), *Tian Feng 天风*, No. 558 (August 11, 1958).

14 "温州教会实行合并" (Churches in Wenzhou carry out mergers), *Tian Feng 天风*, No. 559 (August 25, 1958).

and imperialism,” which is not conducive to Christianity’s turning to socialist society.” “Today should be the time to put an end to the fragmentation caused by imperialism.”¹⁵

In this way, the act of church union, undertaken because of various practical difficulties, became a political consideration. And factors at this level even more promoted the implementation of church union in the majority of provinces and cities. Besides the intra-denominational mergers in Fujian, other provinces and cities carried out the mergers that broke through denominational boundaries.

Following Ningbo and Wenzhou, the churches in Beijing and Shanghai merged one after another. From the winter of 1957 to July 1958, clergy and church workers in Beijing participated in the socialist education movement. When one-third of the people had been labeled Rightists, the study group ended. Members said that they would no longer eat exploitative food, so they assigned the preachers and seminarians not labeled Rightists to farms in the eastern suburbs, and the Rightists to the Nanyuan farm. But once they had been sent to labor, what were believers to do? After discussion, it was decided to keep four churches, one each in the east, west, south and north: Rice Market Church, Dengshikou Church, Gangwa Church, and Kuanjie Church. In Beijing at the time, there had been 65 churches. Keeping these four, 61 church buildings were donated to the State. Several of these were handed directly over to schools, Chongwenmen Church, for example, was donated to 127 Middle School, Dengshikou Church to 25 Middle School. The rest went to the housing authority. Most church items were got rid of. A small number of pastors and church workers were left in charge of the pastoral work and other work, such as registration following mergers, while the rest went to do farm work.

15 *Tian Feng* 天风, No. 559 (August 25, 1958), quoted from Gu Mengfei.

The situation in Shanghai differed from that in Beijing. On August 12, 13 and 15, the Shanghai Christian Socialist Education Commission held a conference of over 1000 Christian co-workers and believers. The meeting decided that each district should set up a Preparatory Committee for Unified Worship to implement union worship within the district. After the meeting, the union worship preparatory committees of various districts held repeated discussions and consultations on the sites for union worship and matters arising after the mergers, to deal with feelings of complacency (“others merged with us”) as well as feelings of inferiority (“we were merged out”). The union worship venues were all selected to be larger and have better conditions for different worship traditions and customs. Those that involved much carrying on and noise were deemed not of benefit to socialist society, and were required to change; allowances were made for those deemed appropriate; under the principle of mutual respect an overall plan was put in place; in addition, it was decided to change the names of some churches following the mergers, and to unify personnel and finances.¹⁶

After several weeks of preparation, on September 7, union services were officially held in the various districts of Shanghai. 208 churches, large and small, were merged into 22 churches, retaining 74 clergy. In 1965, the churches were further merged to 11.¹⁷

Redundant clergy and church staff were transferred to other lines of work following the end of the socialist education movement in 1959, some to the second carpentry factory (later renamed mahogany carving factory), the lighting plant, the woolen sweater plant, the watch and clock

16 See Gu Mengfei.

17 《上海宗教志》(Shanghai Church Magazine) (Shanghai: Shanghai SASS), 546.

factory. Old and frail workers were organized to assemble cartons (according to oral historical data).

In the summer and autumn of 1958, large and medium-sized cities such as Dali, Shenyang, Nanchang, Harbin, Tianjin, Yingkou, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Guiyang, Yangzhou and others carried out church mergers and union worship. By the end of 1958, churches all over the country had basically embarked on the road to unity.¹⁸

The above joint initiatives were driven by many factors. Firstly, under the influence of Chinese culture, denominational consciousness was not very strong in the churches, so it was easy to take the road of unity; secondly, the TSPM strengthened mutual contact and communication between church leaders, and it was also easy to break down the prejudices between religious sects; thirdly, because many believers had left the church and difficulty in maintaining finances, the church had to take the path of merger; fourthly, there was a political boost: denominationalism was seen as a product of imperialism and colonialism, something we should draw clear boundaries with.

At the same time, we can also see that the mergers were hurried, that these were completely movement-type mergers, lacking a process of careful discussion from worship to theological thought among various denominations, finally leading to agreement. And in the circumstances of that time, donating church property so easily also made the restoration of church work in the future that much more difficult. Nevertheless, the Chinese Church took a step that other churches in the world have not been able to achieve. From this point of view, it has made a contribution to the world Christian unity movement.

18 Shen Derong, 44.

Union in Chinese churches from the Cultural Revolution to the early 1980s

The Third National Conference of the Sixth TSPM and the Fourth China Christian Council unanimously adopted “Love Country, Love Church, March into the New Century with One Heart — a summary of 50 years of the TSPM,” on September 22, 2000. The summary divides the TSPM into three stages: “(1) 1950-1966, in which the main tasks were anti-imperialist patriotism, casting off foreign missionary control, regaining the sovereignty of the church, Chinese Christians running their own churches, realizing self-government, self-support and self-propagation. From 1966 – 1978, the impact of the Cultural Revolution brought Christian ministry to a stop. (2) 1979-1998, in which the main task, while adhering to the Three-Self direction, was to move from Chinese running the church themselves to running the church well; that is to say, a church well governed, well supported and propagated well. (3) The Jinan Conference in late 1998, resolved to “strengthen Theological Reconstruction.” This was the beginning of the third stage. These are three different but coherent stages, each with its main task and is the continuation, deepening and enrichment of the previous stage.”¹⁹

These stages can be regarded as a history of the TSPM, but as the history of the Chinese Christian Church, including the history of the Chinese Christian unity movement, it is not enough. The history of the church during the Cultural Revolution period is very important and cannot be written off with the words “Christian ministry was brought to a stop.” At present, the Chinese Church has not systematically

19 “爱国爱教，同心迈向新世纪—中国基督教三自爱国运动五十年的总结”(Love Country, Love Church, March into the new century with one heart—a summary of 50 years of the TSPM), *Tian Feng* 天风, (October 2000):10.

organized this period of history. This author can only discuss this period on the basis of oral historical data collected in recent years.

As this author understands it, in general, Christianity in China was completely underground during this period, and gatherings of believers were often attacked by the people's militia. Some church leaders were routinely arrested, and the Bible was rarely to be found. Bibles smuggled in by foreign organizations were often intercepted by Customs. But it was this political environment that completely removed Christians' various denominational ideas and achieved unprecedented unity. It can also be said that this period promoted genuine unity of Chinese churches. Its peak was in the early 1980s, shortly after the Cultural Revolution. The pastor of a house church told this author that Wenzhou has had two major denominational unions. The first took place in 1958, against an official background, with government support. Although people were united organizationally, they retained their denominational mindset. The second instance took place between 1980 and 1982. This union was initiated by believers and completely cut through denominational ideas; the union was very thorough; there was a roster of preachers available, because this was organized during the Cultural Revolution in an area with a background of "no religion." During the Cultural Revolution, when the "no religion areas" were set up, all believers went underground, and people's denominational ideas were completely dismantled.

The second major union after the founding of new China took place in the early 1980s, and was, as the pastor mentioned above said, based on the Cultural Revolution annihilation of religion. According to this author's research on Wenzhou churches in recent years, almost all the interviewees, no matter whether their churches were under the TSPM system or were home gatherings or meeting

points, believers and clergy both spoke of the extreme “leftist” line of Wenzhou’s “no religion area” during the Cultural Revolution, but the result was excellent for the unity of churches. Because all believers went underground at that time, all denominational divisions were completely broken down.

The pastor of a private home meeting point gave me a vivid description of their meetings then:

At that time, believers could only gather in small family gatherings. There were no preachers; if someone got sick, they asked for prayers. My father-in-law was a very devout believer, who had the gift of prayer. If someone was ill, he would be asked to pray and the person would be cured, and more people believed. There were many people at the meeting and they wanted to sing hymns, but they must not be found out, so everyone went up a mountain to gather in secret. Only a few families lived on the mountain and all of them were believers, so it was safe to gather there. In this way, several prayer mountains were formed, some at the top of the reservoir and some in the mountains. Some people at the foot of the mountain heard that they were about to be arrested, so they fled to a prayer mountain. One of the more famous was Tiantangshan [Paradise Mountain], where there was an old house, Paradise Church. If the authorities appeared it was easy to get away from a mountain gathering.

A pastor from the TSPM system told me:

During the Cultural Revolution, gatherings were not allowed in ‘no religion areas.’” However, volunteers emerged to hold gatherings in their homes. People would get up very early to come to a believer’s “home gathering,” and these were found in many parts of the city. There were gatherings at night, too. However, some were reported by their neighbors and were attacked. After that, I went to the suburbs for gatherings. I would arrive before dawn;

the meeting would end at 10:00 p.m. There was a young people's revival meeting, which lasted for a day or two. These gatherings were usually held in an evangelical village; these evangelical villages were often located at the top of a hill. Several families there were Christians, and no one interfered when they gathered. One or two hundred people usually gathered there. At that time, everyone was very enthusiastic, and some famous pastors were invited to preach. There was a man named Lin Naihai 林乃海 who preached very well. He was a poor peasant and was arrested several times for preaching, but every time he was arrested, his prestige increased. A volunteer, he became a church leader. At that time, we called these gatherings communication meetings.

Another pastor, who set up his own home meeting point, told me a similar story:

During the Cultural Revolution, Wenzhou set up a 'no religion area,' where believers gathered secretly at home. In 1969, the Holy Spirit led believers to meet secretly in the evening through Brother Lin Naihai. At that time, the Spirit was actively leading, and things began with getting people to confess their sins and repent. Meetings then were held from 2 to 3 o'clock in the middle of the night, and had to finish before 4:30 am, otherwise they would be found out by the militia. In the early 1970s, there were baptisms from February to March and a Sunday School was started, but a severe attack soon took place. Naihai was arrested. Mr. Luo was sentenced to eight years for praying and others for five years. In such circumstances, some people flinch and dare not get together again, but an even greater number become stronger. These people were arrested for holding classes, and some were sentenced to three years. In the mid-1970s, Wenzhou Christianity began to develop in the city. This differs from other areas, where things all started in the countryside. Wenzhou believers are unsophisticated

and enthusiastic, and they are not afraid of suffering. They welcomed believers from other areas to the city. They were willing to witness and had the will to suffer, which brought about a revival in the church in Wenzhou. The church was built in the 1980s, in the early days of reform and opening up, and began to hold Sunday School in 1986. The Sunday School teaching materials were all imported from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other places.

They also said that during the Cultural Revolution, pastors were under close surveillance and so did not dare to be seen. But in the 1980s, they emerged one after another to take charge of the three-self churches. This led to conflicts with volunteer leaders. They called the ministers cowards. During the Cultural Revolution, it was said that they only knew how to save themselves. Some of them even tore up the Bible, saying that Jesus was born out of wedlock. Such ministers lost their credibility among believers.

Some believers in another province also talked about the home gatherings during the Cultural Revolution. They also gathered in the wilderness in the dead of night, preaching “Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is near! If you believe in Jesus, your soul will go to heaven. If you don’t believe in Jesus, your soul will go to hell. Believers are not afraid of prison or denunciation. If you go to prison for the gospel, your reward will be greater in heaven. To take up your cross and follow Jesus will bring glory in the future.” “When you are denounced for preaching, be joyful, for you will be crowned with joy in heaven.” They sang spirituals, mainly those like “Beat the Devil” and “Song of the Martyrs,” to inspire people and encourage them not to fear being arrested. Both preachers and believers risked being arrested by the militia any time they got together. Quite a number of preachers, like Zhang Rongliang 张荣亮 and others, had been arrested several times. In those days, Christians everywhere witnessed to miracles and marvels, to driving out ghosts

and curing diseases. When someone in a village was cured through prayer, the number of believers in that village would naturally increase.

One of the elders of the gathering told me that during the Cultural Revolution, the clergy did not dare to make themselves known, and all relied on ordinary believers to take up the work. At that time, although Christians did not dare to act openly, when they met each other, regardless of their denominational background, they would feel a sense of kinship.

From these interviews, we discover that these were times of high pressure, so the meetings were all held in homes or in the mountains or the wilderness; there were no churches at all. These gatherings were organized by volunteers, acting from faith. When they gathered, they hardly had Bibles. Praying, hymn singing, and witnessing were extremely important, as were healing, driving out evil spirits and performing miracles and marvels. They would also invite some “famous preachers.” Most of these so-called “famous preachers” were evangelists who emerged as volunteers and risked being arrested without warning for preaching Christianity. They spoke in a simple, clear manner, calling people to repent. People that believed would go to heaven; those who did not were bound for hell. There was no profound theology. Leaders who had been arrested many times and remained firm in their faith became the recognized leaders of home meetings. Organizationally the situation was very similar to the church in the New Testament period. As Liang Jialin 梁家麟 put it, it is a form of “restorationism.”

This form of organization and content of preaching is very attractive to vulnerable groups, just as in the early church. A pastor told this author: “In fact, many people were possessed by devils at that time. After they were cured, they believed in Jesus. At that time, many people believed

that the poor believed in Jesus because they were sick and the pastors prayed well. So Christianity was developing rapidly among the poor and the sick. The believers had compassionate hearts. When someone's wife died and their children were left unattended, they accepted Christ and the believers came to their aid. Therefore, Christianity was particularly attractive to the poor and those in difficulty. But it was not the same for people with good family backgrounds. They had opinions about Christianity and none of them believed."

The development of Christianity in some provinces and districts mentioned above can represent the development of Christianity all over the country at the time. It was during this particular period of the Cultural Revolution that a number of volunteer preachers and church organizers were trained up. They completely broke with the original denominational concept and truly achieved unity. Of course, this unity was based on restoration, that is, returning to the form of the early church. However, we also found that in this development process in Christianity, the church tended to gradually improve. In particular, the Wenzhou Church developed a co-worker management mode and began to organize youth fellowship, Sunday school and other activities in a planned way.

After the Cultural Revolution, the policy of freedom of religious belief was once again implemented, and church activities were gradually resumed. On April 8, 1979, the Centennial Church in Ningbo, Zhejiang province was the first to re-open (Rice Market Street Church in Beijing was re-opened as early as 1972, but only foreigners were allowed then. Its opening was mainly a matter of international relations, especially the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States). Beginning in September 1979, churches in Shanghai and other parts of the country resumed worship. Some believers had

not lived a religious life for many years, and their hearts were filled with pain. Now that they had a place to go, they were very excited. Churches in various places soon became overcrowded, and churches in some big cities had to have several services on Sunday. Believers then did not pay attention to the small differences in worship among different denominations. What they valued was to be able to have worship and to hear the Word. Some big churches tried to integrate the strong points of various denominations and play down their own characteristics to meet the needs of all types of believers.

Rural churches, including those in cities like Wenzhou, that developed during the Cultural Revolution had no sense of denominationalism. Instead, during the Cultural Revolution they had developed a non-denominational order and organization suited to their local community. Now they could emerge from the underground to above ground and carry out their activities openly in the church. By the early 1980s, the church in Wenzhou had developed a relatively well-developed co-worker management mode for their pastoral area, and there was a unified preaching roster for the churches in the pastoral area, so that every church was assured a preacher. At that time this union was entirely spontaneous. Believers had also achieved unprecedented unity. Clearly the early 1980s was the peak period of unity in Chinese churches. There was no difference then between the Three-Self churches and house churches.

Early 1980s to the Present: The unity of the Three-Self Christian churches in China in the post-denominational period

The establishment of the China Christian Council and the foundation of Church Union

With the resumption of church activities, the ministries of the church became more and more important and the work of church affairs increased. With the growth in the number of Christians, deciding the issue of church property became the most important matter for churches everywhere. The demand for theological education, Bibles and hymnals were all on the agenda. Especially following reform and opening up, connections between Chinese Christianity and Christianity in other countries increased. The original Three-Self Patriotic Committee was just a patriotic and religious (love country, love church) mass organization, unable to undertake the task of connecting the Chinese Church with the churches of other countries, and thus, the establishment of the China Christian Council was imminent.

In March 1980, the TSPM held an enlarged meeting of its Standing Committee members and issued an "Open Letter to Brothers and Sisters in Christ of All China," which focused on the reconstruction of the church. The Third National Christian Conference was held in October of the same year. K. H. Ting gave the Opening Address, titled "Retrospect and Prospect," affirming the justice, rationality and necessity of the TSPM and pointing out that it had made great achievements. But though the task of Three-Self remained unfinished, he proposed the need to go from "running the church ourselves" to "running the church well." In order to achieve the goal of running the church well, the conference decided to establish the China Christian Council (CCC) as the church affairs organization of patriotic Christians. The national TSPM Committee is an organization

of Chinese Christians who love country and love church. The two organizations, abbreviated as the *lianghui* (CCC&TSPM), cooperated closely with each other and worked together to run a self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating church in China. The establishment of the CCC also marked a new step in the unity of the Chinese Christian Church.

In 1982, Bishop Zheng Jianye 郑建业 summed up the principles for the union of Chinese churches in seven points:

- 1) The former denominations no longer bear their original denominational name, but act independently.
- 2) Past national and local organizations of the former denominations have for all intents and purposes ceased their activities and functions. As a result, denominations no longer have their own system.
- 3) Denominations no longer carry out their own activities abroad.
- 4) Denominations do not print or copy their own publications.
- 5) All denominations participate in the TSPM.
- 6) Denominations cooperate with other denominations in the TSPM and in matters of faith seek common ground, reserving minor differences and practicing mutual respect. Denominations do not attack the beliefs and worship traditions of other denominations.
- 7) All denominations advocate the independence and self-determination of the church in China, the believers love country and love church, honor God and benefit people.²⁰

20 Zheng Jianye 郑建业, 竭力保守圣灵所赐合而为一的心” (Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph.4:3)), 《中国基督教三自爱国运动文选 1950-1992》(Anthology of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement: 1950-1992) (Shanghai: TSPM Committee, 1993), 153.

This shows that the characteristic of the union of Chinese churches is that the external manifestations of denominations, such as names, organizations, institutions, overseas contacts, publishing institutions, etc., do not exist. However, on the premise of adhering to basic Christian beliefs, some different internal ideas, beliefs and worship traditions of various denominations are preserved; that is, seeking common ground in organizational forms, while reserving differences in matters of faith and worship, such as different understanding and forms of baptism and Eucharist, varying meeting times and so on. In these matters, uniformity is not sought; rather there is mutual respect for differences and avoidance of criticism.²¹

It is under this principle that some of China's small denominations, though not using the name of their former denominations, remain unchanged in terms of liturgy and belief, thus restoring their original forms of church activities. Through interviews, this author learned that in 1982, a church's daughter church in X city resumed their Communion worship of breaking bread in their former gathering place. Seventh Day Adventists also resumed their activities in another church in the same year.

*The publication of the Hymnal (New Edition) and the Catechism, both of which embody the spirit of unity.*²²

In order to better reflect the unity of Chinese churches, the CCC&TSPM published the *Hymnal (New Edition)* in 1983, which included 400 hymns. Among them, about 300 were selected from different denominational traditions, and in about 100 the words or music were written by Chinese Christians or used Chinese tunes. In order to meet the needs

21 Gu Mengfei.

22 See Gu Mengfei for this section.

of rural churches and small gatherings, 40 short anthems were also included.²³

In July 1983, a Catechism that embodied the spirit of unity was published. Its 7 chapters covered the Bible, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the Church and the saints. In compiling the book, opinions were widely solicited from the churches. Opinions were received from a broad range of different traditions, including nearly every denomination and sect present in China prior to the founding of new China. The editorial group worked from the principle that “we do not wish, by blaming the denominations of the past, to create a new sect. Instead, we wish to appropriate the best elements in each of the various traditions of the past and gather them together into one.” “...when for the first time God has provided us with this unique situation which enables us to embrace the varied forms of illumination encountered in the history of the Church, so that all may be mutually enriched and developed, we are entering together upon the unsearchable riches of Christ.” As for the differences in understanding that existed between former traditions, we should use the principle of mutual respect, seeking the common ground while reserving differences, and “try our best to set different methods, views and practices in parallel rather than insisting on uniformity.” “It must not be assumed that there is an insistence on uniformity in respect of any entry.”²⁴ For example, in the case of the two terms for God (神 *shen* and 上帝 *shangdi*), baptism by immersion and sprinkling, the Parousia, the Ten Commandments, etc; alternative understandings were often set down side by side. Minor differences are to be retained and critical judgments avoided.²⁵

23 Cao Shengjie 曹圣洁, “关于赞美诗编辑工作的发言” (Statement on editorial work in the new hymnal,) *Tian Feng* 天风 (No. 2, 1983): 12.

24 “《要道问答》编写工作回顾” (Looking back at the editorial work on The Catechism), *Tian Feng* 天风 (No. 2, 1984):16-17.

25 Gu Mengfei.

Drafting and implementation of the Church Order of Protestant Churches in China affirmed the coexistence of multiple systems in the church and laid the foundation for the church rules and order for the Chinese Church in the post-denominational era.

Following the achievement of union worship, the old church order was no longer effective, and the new one not (yet) established. With the huge growth in the number of Christians, chaos was growing. For example, people who had not themselves been baptized were baptizing others and ordaining themselves to the ministry. Because of this, in 1987, the Chinese Church passed the Resolution on Promoting Self-Government and Formulating a Church Order, and established a Church Order Committee. In late 1991, the Church Order for Trial Use was issued in an attempt to establish a new type of church. After several years of hard work, the CCC passed the Chinese Christian Church Order; in December 1996, affirming the coexistence of multiple systems in the church, and laying the foundation for church rules and an order for the Chinese Church in the post-denominational era. This Order emphasized the principle of mutual respect in matters of faith tradition and worship, “mutual acceptance, not attacks or forced unity.” However, it is also clearly stipulated that [churches and meeting points] “may not independently formulate a church order under a denominational name.”²⁶ This regulation reflects the differences between Chinese Christianity and Christianity in other countries in the world. For example, the chapter on ministry says that the Chinese Church has bishops, but the bishop is not in charge of the diocese as in the Episcopal system; there are elders, but they do not

26 《中国基督教教会规章》(Chinese Christian Church Order), *Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference Album*, 67.

control the administrative power of the church as in the Presbyterian system. Everything is set down according to the actual needs of Chinese churches, and not only embodies the spirit of unity, but also reflects the mutual respect between different religious traditions.²⁷ Revisions were made to this Order in 2008 and 2018 in response to needs of social development. The 2008 revision was undertaken on the basis of Theological Reconstruction (1998). In 2018, the revision was based on the Sinicization of Christianity put forward in 2011.

The new Order issued in December 2018 revised the 2008 regulations in six major aspects: “adheres to the direction of the Sinicization of Christianity and requires local churches, on a basis of respecting and identifying with Chinese cultural traditions, to explore and establish a mode of church life with Chinese characteristics, actively adapt to socialist society, make clear the Chinese Church’s system of governance, strengthen the church character of the CCC&TSPM; promote the church’s moving from post-denominationalism to unity; strengthen the operability of the Order, providing local churches the grounds to comply in the process of running the church democratically according to the law; to strive for the standardization of the Order, to reduce divisions on the basis of respecting the needs of churches with different faith backgrounds; to strengthen awareness of problems and highlight the problem orientation.”²⁸

These six amendments are closely related to Christian unity. In the 1920s, Christian unity was closely related to the prerequisite of indigenization. That is to say, the

27 Gu Mengfei.

28 “新修订的《中国基督教教会规章》已经通过!” (The new revised Order of Chinese Christian Churches has been adopted!) <http://www.ccctspm.org/newsinfo/11262>, accessed December 21, 2018.

unification of Chinese Christianity was inseparable from the indigenization of the Chinese Church. Because the Chinese Church was based on Chinese culture, it was naturally different from the Western denominational churches. In this regard, there is a striking similarity in this (present) Order; that is, Christian unity is closely related to the Sinicization of Christianity and is based on Chinese culture. During the indigenization movement in the 20th century, many Christians were closely involved in the society of the time, and actively engaged in patriotic activities such as “the movement to recover authority in education” and “the May 30th Movement.” Today, this Church Order clearly proposes adaptation to socialist society. This is the guarantee of Christian unity. In particular, it is very important to highlight the church character of the CCC&TSPM and to move from the post-denominational stage toward unity; this is extremely important. This illustrates that there remain many problems in the way of real Christian unity in China. The Church needs to go further along the road to unity.

Problems in Chinese Christian Church unity after the mid-1980s

Division among Chinese churches on the basis of participation in Three-Self.

During the Cultural Revolution, a large part of the older believers in Chinese churches, especially those in large and medium-sized cities, basically had no religious life. Yet, churches that quietly developed in rural areas around Wenzhou and Henan all embarked on the “house church” path. At that time, there was no regular form of organization and there was a shortage of clergy. A group of leaders emerged from among ordinary believers. They had no denominational consciousness but were deeply trusted

by believers. In the late Cultural Revolution, something of a trend toward union appeared in the organizational set up among house churches. By the early 1980s, when the Church had just become openly active again, Christians truly had broken with the idea of denominations, and unity had reached its height. However, with the deepening of reform and opening up, and the gradual recovery of the Three-Self organizations, splits began to appear in the Church.

Take Wenzhou as an example. In the early 1980s, the churches in the Cangnan district of Wenzhou were greatly influenced by the “Yellers” sect. In 1983, the Wenzhou government cracked down on the “Yellers.” In 1984, the Wenzhou government asked all churches to participate in Three-Self. This caused the first great division in the Wenzhou church. A group of churches had formed in Wenzhou in the late Cultural Revolution, led by a group of lay co-workers who formed a management mode which was composed of ordinary believers of the church. The restoration of Three-Self activities took place after the revival of the church, but the church council management mode of Three-Self was not in step with the co-workers model. Thus, when Three-Self wanted to replace the original co-workers model with the church council model, it was met with strong resistance from a group of believers.

The main reason some believers opposed joining Three-Self was that they feared the church would then be subject to government jurisdiction and there would be no freedom of religious belief. What’s more, they saw that many pastors who had behaved badly during the Cultural Revolution took up leadership positions in Three-Self. This was unacceptable to ordinary believers. For example, there was a pastor who was indifferent to his faith during the Cultural Revolution. When the main co-workers at Paradise Mountain were arrested, the government gave them pig’s blood to eat, which

the co-workers refused to do. However, the pastor ate two big bowls; this was regarded as proof of his unfaithfulness to the Bible. And so when Three-Self was being restored, many did not want to participate when they saw people like him become an official in the Three-Self organization.

Some believers satirized these ministers, saying “during the Cultural Revolution, you all withdrew into your shells like turtles. Now when you see that the church is in a better position, you want to come out again to take advantage of it.” Christians in several coastal counties to the east of Wenzhou were most resistant. But because most of the churches in those areas did not join Three-Self, the struggle within the churches was not too intense, simply because a large proportion of Christians in those counties were in house churches. In areas where the two factions were more evenly matched, the struggle was very fierce.

Yueqing county was one of these. Generally speaking, older believers had experienced the hardships of previous movements, so most of them advocated participating in Three-Self, while most of the young believers who grew up in the Cultural Revolution were against it. This is also the why the house churches were generally more vigorous than the Three-Self churches. In many places, the two factions had physical conflicts contesting [the rights to] churches and pulpits. This was the case with the Liaoshi church in Yueqing, Wenzhou. The two factions fought ferociously. Finally, a group of anti-Three-Self believers separated from the church and established Mu-en Church. A Wenzhou pastor told me that the most serious divisions in the church in Wenzhou took place 1985-1990. At that time, both the Religious Affairs Bureau Director Ren Wuzhi 任务之 and Bishop K.H. Ting were alarmed by the situation and both came to Wenzhou to learn about the church situation and the intensity of the division.

The same situation occurred in some areas of another province. Taking a city in this province as an example, in the 1980s, there was a crackdown on the expansion of the Yellers. Even those who had not participated in Yeller activities or had only participated once or twice were interrogated. In some places, burlap sacks were even put over the heads of leaders of the so-called Yellers and marched through the streets, which greatly hurt the feelings of believers. Therefore, in 1984, when the local government asked the grass-roots rural areas to establish Three-Self organizations, the believers rejected it and most of them became members of the house churches.

At the time, whether or not to join Three-Self became the main cause of the great division of Christianity in all parts of the country. The two areas discussed above are typical.

Causes of divisions in the church in recent decades

As far as Three-Self itself is concerned, it has also faced many problems around unity in recent decades.

One is expressed in an increase in denominational consciousness, especially in small denominations, and the trend toward separation has become increasingly intense. Since the implementation of union, the Chinese Church has promoted “reserving (small) differences,” as long as the former denomination does not use its former denominational brand. But this practice has little effect, because not only they have long recognized themselves as members of this small denomination, but also the members of the “big church” regard them as members of that small denomination. Whether or not they identify themselves as such has no effect on the strength of their denominational ideas. According to actual investigation, in some places, in order to maintain apparent unity, different

denominations have to worship in the same church. As a result, the contradictions between the two sides become more and more acute. We have observed that there are almost no cases where two sects share the same church without conflict. A few years ago, when we went to a large church for investigation, we heard some believers say that the believers of the former Seventh Day church had finally moved out. When they were there, they had foot washing on Saturdays, and basins of foot washing water left the church floor wet and smelly. In another city, there were frequent conflicts between the Seventh Day group and the big church. In November 2017, a big church security guard injured an elder of the Seventh Day church.

Nowadays, the problem of denominations is a practical problem. It will not disappear just because there is no denominational signboard. The key issue is not whether there are still denominations, but whether there is mutual respect among them. Under the Three-Self principle, each should manage their own ministry well.

Secondly, divisions in the church due to power struggles are also very common. Over the years, research has found that in some churches there are struggles for power and profit, and the contradictions are prominent. A few years ago, I learned that in the largest church in one city, the pastors of two factions fought over their respective authority, and many believers left in tears. Finally, the Religious Affairs Bureau made up its mind to dispatch the CCC&TSPM to form a working group to establish a presence in the church. It took nearly a year to solve the problem by putting aside the clergy of both factions and mobilizing the masses of believers. In another city, one group of clergy drove another group out of the church. The expelled group had to rent another place to get together and formed a house church. The director of the Religious Affairs Bureau was very angry with the pastors who occupied the church but could

not do anything about it. Such incidents have probably been repeated in churches all over the country.

Third, there are divisions caused by disputes over liturgy; for example, over the introduction of praise meetings. Some large churches are dominated by conservative clergy, who drive away groups of young people who hold praise meetings in the church, causing a split in the church. These young people gather outside on their own, in house churches. I have learned that in Shanxi and Guangzhou, some house churches were formed in this way, after splitting from the “big churches.”

Fourth, in recent years, the charismatic movement has caused divisions from time to time. In one city a charismatic church was formed by a youth fellowship that split from a big church. An elder of the big church who led the youth fellowship accepted the charismatic way, which the original church regarded as heresy. He had to leave, and when he left, a group of young people followed him, so he established a charismatic church outside the church that had rejected him.

All these examples indicate that the Christian unity movement in China is facing various challenges. How Chinese Christianity can carry out its unification is a practical problem facing the CCC&TSPM.

The future for the unity of Three-Self Christian Churches in China

Since the Reformation, Protestantism has become more and more divided. But this has not affected the development of Christianity. On the contrary, because there are many denominations suited to the needs of different groups of people, the overall development of Protestant Christianity has surpassed that of Catholic Christianity.

However, in the history of the Protestant Christian Church, various Christian denominations also joined together in response to needs in mission work. This was especially true among the missionaries who came to China in the second half of the 19th century, when joint activities grew relatively large. We can see from their national conferences held in China that the participants came from various denominations. But this was not denominational unity in our sense today.

Can the churches in China's Three-Self structure follow the path of union that international churches have taken?

There are many forms of oneness in Christianity: internal unity in a denomination, unity among different denominations, Christian unity in ministry, and so on. There are also differences in the degree of unity among different denominations. Some denominations break their denominational boundaries and unite into one church. For example, the United Church of Canada is composed of the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Congregational Union, the Association of Local Union Churches, and the Canadian Conference of the Evangelical Union Brethren Church. Following their merger, the United Church has become a church in the true sense, that is, in its internal organizational system, liturgy, and theology: a basic consensus after full consultation has been reached. The reason this could happen is that these denominations were all part of the congregational system, and all are also basically liberal in theology, so it was easier to break through denominational boundaries.

Are the churches within the TSPM framework similar to those in United Church of Canada? This depends on whether we have a similar basis for union.

What is the basis for the unity of Christianity in China? According to the seven principles of union put forward by Bishop Zheng Jianye in 1982, the most important is that all churches participate in the TSPM, love the country and love the church, and individual denominations do not set up their own organizations, do not style themselves using the name of their former denomination, do not carry out individual activities with foreign countries, and do not print and issue publications on their own. These are actually external things. On the other hand, core religious beliefs and liturgy are handled according to the principle of seeking common ground and reserving minor differences, that is, on the premise of adhering to basic Christian beliefs. Some different ideas, belief concepts and worship traditions of various denominations are preserved; that is, seeking common ground in organizational form while reserving differences in faith and worship. In fact, common ground is not really sought in organizational form, but various denominations' national top-down organizations have been dismantled, while the denominational structure at the grassroots has remained unchanged. As a result, there is a big difference between the union of churches in China and those abroad.

A United Church in the Western sense must at least have a unified organization. For example, although Chinese Catholicism distinguishes between "above ground" and "underground," its organizational structure is one, that is, the episcopal system. How is the Chinese Protestant Church organized? It has bishops, but not an episcopal system; it has elders, but not a presbyterian system. What makes it even more complicated is that having gone through the "no-religion era" of the Cultural Revolution, various systems with mainly volunteers in leadership roles have been developed in various places. Some grass-roots churches and meeting points have pastors as the main leaders of the church; some have elders. Pastors are employed and may be dismissed at

any time. There are also churches that have no pastor, as is the case with meeting places. Can a united church, which cannot even unify its church system, be regarded as a church in a genuine sense?

The next question is whether the Chinese Church can achieve a unified church system. Given the current situation of the church, there is no such possibility. With the increasing pace of reform and opening up, the increase of contacts with overseas countries, the acceleration of domestic urbanization that has resulted in increased population mobility, the influence of the charismatic movement and many other factors, city churches have become more diversified, and thus denominational consciousness has been significantly enhanced. Among small denominations especially, it is almost impossible to truly unify the religious system. In the 1980s, the transformation in the Wenzhou church from a co-worker to a church council system caused great conflict, such that a number of people joined house churches. If today we want to inflexibly adopt the practice of a unified church system, this can only lead to more people joining house churches. More importantly, the Chinese Church has no intention to undertake this kind of unification. Since it is seeking common ground while reserving minor differences, why should it undertake such a futile endeavor?

In addition, liturgical unity is also an important part of the church in the true sense. This too is impossible for the Chinese Church, and not only because worship in the former small denominations has never been touched; the sticking point is the big church. In recent years, with the increased contact with foreign countries, some Chinese churches have reintroduced worship practices from overseas that have denominational characteristics. For example, some churches have introduced high-level Anglican liturgy into their churches. Worship is not a problem of unification, but it is becoming more and more diversified.

From the perspective of Chinese Protestant Christian theology, the vast majority of Chinese grassroots believers are fundamentalists, and liberal theology meets with resistance from grassroots believers. The Chinese Protestant Church has not yet formed its own unique system of theological thought, and it is impossible for the church to produce such a theological system in a short time.

All these factors show that the post-denominational model of Chinese Protestantism is not the united church model in the Western sense. It is no wonder that the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, dominated by European and American Churches, holds that the post-denominationalism unification experience of Chinese churches lacks sufficient theoretical basis in faith and theology.

Are the churches in China's Three-Self organization similar to those of the World Council of Churches?

There are some unified Christian ministries that are rather loosely organized. For example, the World Council of Churches mainly coordinates and communicates with churches around the world. Although some Eastern Orthodox churches participate, it is mainly composed of more open-minded Christian denominations. Protestant evangelical and fundamentalist denominations do not participate, nor do the Seventh Day Adventists and other small denominations.

Is the Three-Self structure of today's Chinese Protestant Church similar to that of the National Christian Council of China prior to the founding of new China? In my opinion it is similar to some extent, but there are also differences. First of all, the churches in the CCC&TSPM system today were established on a foundation of participation in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. Because TSPM is based on political considerations, it takes in more denominations than

the National Christian Council of the past. It includes not only modernists, but also evangelicals and fundamentalists. It includes not only the originally mainstream denominations, such as Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregational, etc. (these denominations actually participated in the National Christian Council of China before the founding of new China), but also the conservative denominations unwilling to join the Council in the past, for example, the China Inland Mission (CIM), which had withdrawn from the Council in 1926, and the small denominations such as the Christian Assembly, the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the True Jesus Church, as well as a number of non-denominational churches that emerged during the Cultural Revolution. As a result, there are more believers in the Church under the Three-Self structure, with theological ideas ranging from liberal to fundamentalist, far more than those of the National Christian Council in the past. As long as they support the government, they may participate in Three-Self. Of course, under the Three-Self framework, denominations must not attack each other but respect each other.

Secondly, because today's Chinese Protestant Church is unified under the banner of Three-Self and Three-Self is also the bridge and link between the government and the Church, under the Three-Self structure the relationship between local churches is closer than it was under the framework of the former National Christian Council. However, since the Three-Self organization is also under regional/national management, and is managed by the Religious Affairs Bureau of the local government, the CCC&TSPM cannot form a top-down strict management system like the church itself. The CCC&TSPM at the higher level have only the authority to guide, but not to discipline, the lower CCC&TSPM organizations. Therefore, it does not resemble a real Western-style United Church.

Under the Three-Self framework, the Christian Church can only follow its own unique mode of unity, that is, the CCC&TSPM mode of governance.

At present, the management mode of the Chinese Protestant Church can only be called the management mode of the Chinese Christian CCC&TSPM. It is a mode with Chinese characteristics, which differs from that of the united churches of other countries or other church federations in the world. This model would also be difficult for other countries to follow. It is a mode produced under the specific conditions of China. Church union under this mode has not attained the level of that in Western united churches, but it also differs from foreign church associations and church federations. It is not a coordinating agency between churches of various sects, but an association of the churches following the institution of union worship. It has some characteristics of a united church. "In some ways, it has actually partly functioned as a united church."²⁹

The Chinese Church today is also aware of the need to strengthen the church character of the CCC&TSPM. In the newly revised Order of Protestant Churches in China adopted at the Tenth NCCC held at the end of November 2018, it was proposed that "the governing system of Chinese churches should be clarified, the church nature of the CCC&TSPM should be strengthened, and it should promote the Chinese Church to move from post-denominationalism toward further unity" and "make every effort to standardize the Church Order" and on the basis of respecting churches with different faith backgrounds, reduce divisions." All these reflect that the Chinese Protestant Church has unswervingly

29 Cao Shengjie, "中国基督教为加强教会性而努力" (Chinese Christianity is striving to enhance its church nature) *Tian Feng* 天凤 No. 1 (2005):26.

advanced along the road of unity under the governing mode of the CCC&TSPM.

Under this governing mode, the national Chinese Protestant Church will not be able to follow the mode of Western united churches. That is to say, a united church with a vertical system is not possible, because the CCC&TSPM are not the highest authority of the national Protestant Church, but a guiding body. According to the principle of management territoriality, it cannot become an organ of authority. The CCC&TSPM organs in various provinces, cities and regions can heed their suggestions or not, because they mainly obey the leadership of the local government. Therefore, the CCC&TSPM management of churches in China is mainly based on regions, recognizing regional differences and the particularity of some denominations. Seeking common ground while reserving minor differences, each church and meeting point, on the basis of a shared recognition and acceptance of the leadership of the local CCC&TSPM, develops its own function. Of course, this does not exclude the fact that in some cities with strong CCC&TSPM, such as Qingdao and Shantou, the CCC&TSPM has overall control of the churches in the whole urban area: clergy salaries, the preaching in churches and meeting points and the clergy assignments are all allocated by the CCC&TSPM. The CCC&TSPM in these areas have the characteristics of foreign united churches. However, in many areas of China, the CCC&TSPM have little strength, and the grass-roots churches are very strong. The CCC&TSPM are quite unable to function to unify the church but can only play the role of conveying government decisions, making the wishes of the higher authorities known to those below. In these areas, the authority of the CCC&TSPM should be properly strengthened. On the whole, the Protestant Church of China must recognize the differences between regions and believers with different religious backgrounds. On this basis,

it should reduce the differences and strive to augment its church character. This is the CCC&TSPM management mode, the mode of unity with Chinese characteristics. Today as we advocate the Sinicization of Christianity, the CCC&TSPM mode, on the basis of love of country and love of church, also adds to the content of the Sinicization of Christianity in China.

In my research in recent years, I have deeply felt that the CCC&TSPM must strengthen their church character. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese churches were dominated by various denominations. They all had their own relatively good top to bottom management systems, and those who violated the Order would be punished. With the abolition of denominations and the absence of a top-down authoritative management model for Chinese churches, some local churches or meeting points are dominated by bad people, and the CCC&TSPM have no way to deal with them. In recent decades, there have been disputes among Chinese churches, and heretical cults in the name of Christianity have continually emerged. This is because that the CCC&TSPM do not have the same authority as the former denominational churches. Therefore, it is very important for the unity of Christianity in China to increase the church character of the CCC&TSPM and thus enhance their authority. Although the external form of unity is important, it is more important to increase the cohesion of the church, so that the believers can truly recognize and maintain that the Chinese Christian Church is "one united church."

In short, the Chinese unity model initiated by the Chinese Protestant Church, namely the CCC&TSPM governing mode, is without doubt a contribution to the worldwide movement for Christian unity. Although it has many imperfections, it has enabled the majority of Chinese denominations and believers to break through

denominational boundaries and gather under the banner of the CCC&TSPM, thus realizing the overall unification of the Chinese Protestant Church. In this regard, it can be said that the achievements of Chinese Christian unity are great. The unification process will not be smooth. But this author believes that as long as the Chinese Protestant Church moves unswervingly forward in this direction, it will certainly unite the church and create a brilliant future.

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Chinese Church Unity: History, Reality, Future

中国教会合一：历史·现实·未来

CHEN YONGTAO 陈永涛

1

With the strong support of its leadership, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary held an important faculty symposium in 2018 at Qinglong Mountain Villa, in Jiangning, Nanjing, to mark the 60th anniversary of union worship in Chinese Protestant churches and the 20th anniversary of Theological Reconstruction. This was not only a matter of reviewing history to understand the wonderful leadership of God for the Chinese Church, but more, to stand in present reality and look to the future, gazing at the image of a united Chinese Protestant Church, and working hard for it.

The keynote speech by Professor Duan Qi 段琦 on “The Historical Path to Unity in Chinese Protestantism” provided us with a clear developmental context from a historical perspective, especially focusing on the positive impact of union worship on church unity in China and the challenges and problems facing church unity in reality. I gained a deeper understanding of the history of church union in China from Prof. Duan’s keynote. Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie 曹圣洁 has been a witness to this history, having experienced it personally. Her valuable responses to the keynote not only provided us with a great deal of detailed understanding, but also made the events more vivid.

Truth be told, my knowledge of Chinese church history is limited and what I know of the history of union worship is fragmentary, so I was somewhat at a loss about how to respond to Prof. Duan's keynote, and even more so following the wonderful response from Rev. Cao combined with her own experience. In my response here, I will consider four areas, with a slight emphasis on theology.

Needless to say, in the 1950s, union worship was key to moving the Chinese Protestant Church toward a "post-denominational church." Although the post-denominational concept was put forward only in the 1980s, the fact of post-denominationalism in the Chinese Church emerged following [the adoption of] union worship. On the one hand, the post-denominational Chinese Church was often regarded as an example of church unity by the worldwide Church ecumenical. On the other hand, due to the historical causes of "union worship" and post-denominational Chinese churches, some often criticized the church as the product of political movements, meaning that "union worship" and "post-denominational" churches were simply the result of the Chinese government's suppression of Christianity, as well as of the Church's submission to the government, and thus not the will of God. But historically, such criticism, if not totally biased, is at least unfair. There is no denying that there are political factors and even political pressure behind union worship, but political pressure is not the only factor. What's more, the Bible also tells us that secular power sometimes becomes a tool for God to accomplish his will. The power of the world can be a tool for God to judge his people; it can also be an instrument for God to bless them. Isaiah 10:5 says, "Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger—the club in their hands is my fury!" Here we can see that because of the sins of Israel, God punished his people through the power of Assyria. And Isaiah 45 tells us that God also uses

secular power to bless his people. God anointed Cyrus king of Persia to allow the Jews held in Babylon to return and rebuild their homeland. Here, King Cyrus of Persia became a symbol of God's blessing of his people through secular power.

God is mighty. He can create something from nothing and build a resurrected life from death. The thought of God is greater than that of humans, and the way of God is greater than that of humans. Sometimes he does his work in a way that people do not immediately understand, in order to accomplish his will. From the perspective of the history of the Chinese Protestant Church and the development of Chinese Christianity following reform and opening up, it would not be going too far to regard the union worship of 1958 as the blessing of God for the Chinese Church. It not only enabled the Church to take a key step on the road to unity, it was also a foreshadowing of its future development.

As a matter of fact, church unity is not a church demand that only emerged in the 1950s in order to cope with a new social and political situation. The question of church unity was raised very early on and was also very important then as well. The divisions in Christianity and mutual exclusion among denominations have always been areas for criticism and attacks. And not only that, the existence of denominations obviously bore the stigma of Western mission societies; for example, the Basel Mission, the Berlin Mission Society, the London Mission Society, and the Church Mission Society (CMS; Anglican), etc. Even their names represented foreign entities, and this caused Chinese people to readily reject Christianity.

As early as the beginning of the 20th century, in order to strive for the development of the church, knowledgeable people began to advocate denominational union and the removal of denominational barriers to ministry. Churches and denominations began to seek the way of "unity" and

“cooperation,” which became one of the missions of the Church at that time. Among churches and denominations there was recognition of the importance of unity and cooperation. Churches working together made church ministry work twice as well. Denominations no longer tried to undermine or fight with each other. Through mutual cooperation, the church accumulated strength and expanded its ministry, which was conducive to the development of the church. All churches and denominations jointly promoted the fight against drugs, the China for Christ movement, domestic revivals, the petition for freedom of belief and so on. In addition, Bible translation also needed to be done cooperatively. Many churches were eager to have “one” church, hoping to get rid of the notion of denominationalism and establish a church or church organization that would transcend denominations. This gave rise to the “cooperation and unity” movement that emerged at the time.

The unity movement had two aspects: denominational unity, such as among Presbyterians, Anglicans and Lutherans; and merging of denominations. Firstly, denominations sought to merge the churches established by different missionary societies into a single church system and form a national association to coordinate the whole. In addition, denominations were to be named in accordance with Chinese language conventions, or the denomination’s name was to be preceded by the word “China.” In addition to the interdenominational union, there was intra-denominational union. Many denominations established combined national organizations. Worth mentioning here is the establishment of the Church of Christ in China. From April 1918, the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists, along with the London Mission Society, discussed the possibility of merger, and then it gradually expanded. All denominations who wanted to join were welcomed. By 1927, a total of 19 denominations had participated in the

establishment of a united Church of Christ in China and the first formal General Assembly was held in September of that year. As a result, the Church of Christ in China became the largest denomination in China. The establishment of the Church of Christ in China can be regarded as a model of the church unity movement in the first half of the 20th century.

Second, cooperation in ministry, for example, the Christian Education Council, the China Continuation Committee, etc. These works of unity had been in process for a long time. The “China Centenary Missionary Conference” held in 1907 embodied the spirit of cooperation among churches. At this meeting, some people advocated the establishment of a national nondenominational Christian Federation of China. By 1913, this proposal had been partially realized. At the initiative and organization of John R. Mott, the first “National Conference” was held in Shanghai, at which a national Christian institution was established: “The China Continuation Committee,” with Cheng Jingyi 诚静怡 as general secretary. At the National Conference held in May 1922, the organization was renamed “the National Christian Council of China,” with Cheng Jingyi appointed as president. In the area of cooperative ministry, the National Christian Council of China did a great deal of work. It was mainly a consultant and liaison organization, responsible for planning, survey and research, and exploring new ministry possibilities, especially rural reconstruction work and large-scale evangelization projects. Prior to the Anti-Japanese War, the Council comprised 16 denominations, with a total of 300,000 members, accounting for 61% of the total number of believers in the country.

Promoted by the Continuation Committee and some regional churches, there were many united ministries in the 1930s, such as the Concordia University 协和大学, agricultural reform in Lichuan, Jiangxi province, and the North China agricultural service society. These cooperative

programs were mainly planned and promoted by some supra-denominational ministries (such as the National Christian Council, the YMCA and Christian colleges).

Also, as early as the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese Christian leaders and Chinese theologians recognized the importance of church unity and actively promoted it. In recognition of the harm of denominationalism to Chinese society and the church at that time, most of them fiercely attacked denominationalism, whether they were so-called theological “liberals” or so-called theological “fundamentalists.” They thought that the problem of denominationalism was one that must be solved by the Chinese Church, and that the goal of the Chinese Church was to merge or unite the churches. For example, T.C. Chao 赵紫宸 (Zhao Zichen) once pointed out that when Western Christianity was introduced into China, Western churches and missions split into different denominations and small sects. They only emphasized those doctrines, organizations, traditions and attitudes in their individual systems. As a result, because of these divisions Chinese saw only individual trees, their eyes could not be opened to see the whole forest. Therefore, the introduction of Western denominations rendered us unable to see the whole picture of the Christian Church.

In this period, because of the national disaster in China, the Church in China began to display unity among its different denominations. These actions of cooperation and unity will lead us to a clearer understanding of the importance of the Church.¹ Jia Yuming 贾玉铭, regarded as the leader in the evangelical church, also recognized

1 T. C. Chao 赵紫宸, “The Future of the Church in Social and Economic Thought and Action,” (1938), in *The Collected English Writings of T. C. Chao*, ed. Wang Xiaozhao (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishers, 2009), 409-434.

the problems denominationalism brought to the Chinese Church and advocated church unity. As early as 1907, he began to participate in the movement for church unity in Shandong. Jia Yuming not only stressed unity of internal denominational organization, but also actively participated in cross-denominational joint ministries. Although he opposed the superficial and organizational unity without a basis in faith, he had a clear understanding of the harm of denominationalism and the importance of church unity. Wang Delong 王德龙 discusses Jia Yuming's advocacy for and engagement in church unity in his recent book.²

However, as Prof. Duan told us in her keynote speech, in the first half of the 20th century, although the church achieved some results in union and unity, it was plagued by the problem of denominationalism. Denominationalism was also one of the reasons why the church was criticized and attacked at the time. However, it is interesting to note that the union worship of 1958, which was facilitated by external forces (including political factors), enabled the Chinese Church to take a previously unimaginable step toward denominational unity. When things seemed impossible, it laid the groundwork for the revival of the Chinese Church following reform and opening up. We can only say this is God's wonderful work.

2

David M. Paton was a British missionary who spent many years in China. In 1953, shortly after he had to leave China and return to England, he published his book *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God*, reflecting on and criticizing

2 Wang Delong 王德龙, 《以“信”废“用”:贾玉铭生平及思想研究》(Jia Yuming's life and thought) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2017), 48-56.

the failure of Western missions in China. Paton points out that if a Protestant Church cannot solve the ecclesiological problem well, the church there will inevitably split.³ Thus we can see the importance of ecclesiology to church unity. Without a mature ecclesiological foundation, real unity can hardly be achieved. More than 40 years later, Eerdmans published the second edition of the book, in 1996. In his "An Introduction" to this second edition, Bob Whyte points out that "The post-denominational church so often spoken of is the product of political necessity rather than of ecclesiology. It is true that today the majority of Christians in China probably have no experience of denominations, but the lack of a sense of history combined with years of isolation have led to a situation in which a de facto congregational order has emerged and where nonlocal church structures are seen as merely expedient from an organizational point of view."⁴ Although Whyte drew his conclusions more than 20 years ago, and his observation may not be comprehensive, what he said about the post-denominational Chinese Church lacking an ecclesiological foundation is true. The problem of a church order has been puzzling the uniting Chinese Church. Although the denominational form no longer exists, not only does the denominational mindset persist, there is a trend toward a resurgence of denominations. Carrying out church unity lacks exploration of a solid ecclesiological foundation, yet in seeking unity for the Chinese Church, an appropriate ecclesiology is essential. Although the Chinese Church has made some effort in this regard, it still has a long way to go.

In constructing an ecclesiology for the Chinese Church, the Bible and the theology of the Church ecumenical are

3 See David M. Paton, *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 103.

4 Bob Whyte, "An Introduction," in David M. Paton, *Christian Missions and the Judgment of God*, 34-35.

indispensable resources. From biblical teachings and an understanding of contemporary theology, there should be an emphasis on the church as the creation of the Triune God: the church is the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the modern ecumenical movement for church unity, the main mode for realizing the unity of the Christian Church is called "the ecclesiology of communion". This is deeply rooted in the early church ecclesiology that regarded the Church as the mystical Body of Christ and the Four Marks of the Church as set out in the Nicene Creed as its foundation. The World Council of Churches 1998 document, "The Nature and Purpose of the Church" focuses on the foundation of Christology and Pneumatology. The document claims, "The Church is thus the creature of God's Word and of the Holy Spirit. It belongs to God, is God's gift and cannot exist by and for itself."

In October 2013, at its Tenth Assembly in Busan, South Korea, the WCC accepted the document titled: "The Church: Towards a Common Vision." Following an explanation of the "four marks" of the church and their correlation to the modern Church ecumenical, the paper particularly highlights the concept of the ecclesiology of communion. It points out that "the church is essentially a fellowship in Triune God, and at the same time, it is a fellowship in which its members participate in God's mission and life. The church is therefore an entity both divine and human." The Church as an ecclesiology of communion basically means three main things: (1) an emphasis on Christian existence, which includes the close and vital unity of individual believers and the community of faith in life with the Triune God. (2) the church is not an institution, but a dynamic and vibrant fellowship of love among believers. The church is not God's kingdom but God's people on their pilgrimage to the final kingdom. (3) our union with the Triune God and other Christians becomes visible and concrete in worship, holy

Word and Holy Communion. When we receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist, we become a visible body of Christ. Only by being involved in Christ can the Church be united. The people of God, the body of Christ, spiritual fellowship and so on all show that unity is not uniformity. The unity of the Church in China should be a unity of diversity. This requires us to develop an ecclesiology of the Chinese Church in our own situation on the basis of accepting the authority of the Bible and the legacy of the Church ecumenical.

3

Let me briefly talk about the possible contribution of incarnation theology to church unity. It can be said that theological reflection of Chinese Christianity in the 20th century has been centered on Christology. For Chinese theologians in the first half of the 20th century, the theme of incarnation was a very important theme, although their understanding of incarnation may not have been entirely the same. Those theologians who tended toward the more liberal in their contextual interpretation of Christology, put particular emphasis on the historical Jesus or the human nature of Jesus Christ, and understood the incarnate Jesus as the embodiment of God's truth. In their view, as a perfect man, Jesus fully realizes the Word of God. Theologians who tended toward more traditional theology emphasized that Jesus Christ is the preexisting Word, the transcendent God entering human history to bring them salvation. For example, Jia Yuming pointed out that Jesus Christ is God become man, entering human history, and by his sacrifice on the cross, solving the problem of human sin in history.

In a later period, T.C. Chao spent six months in prison, after which he had a new understanding of faith. He began to emphasize the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ, believing that Jesus Christ was the preexisting Word of

God become man. The later Chao especially emphasized the pre-existence and kenosis of Christ, which Chao called “emptiness.”⁵

For Chinese theologians or Christians in the unique social and political situation in the second half of the 20th century, the theme of incarnation remains central. Of course, due to their different concerns, their interpretations have different emphases. For example, Bi Yongqin 毕咏琴 emphasized the importance of incarnation for harmony [in the church]; Shen Yifan 沈以藩 focused on the sanctification of secular life through incarnation; Wang Weifan 汪维藩 focused on the incarnation connecting the heavenly life in God and earthly life.⁶ Although they have different emphases, all stress Christ’s “self-emptying.” The spirit of this emptying (kenosis) is also essential to the unity of the Church. Without kenosis, there can be no identification with others, only self-centeredness.

Recently, there was a story on the Internet about the Catholic Mindong parish and its strides toward union. According to the report, Bishop Zhan Silu 詹思禄, a bishop of the Catholic Patriotic Association Church, became the rightful bishop of eastern Fujian diocese, while Bishop Guo Xijin 郭希锦, who was not a member of the patriotic church system, became the assistant bishop of that diocese. The relevant appointment was recognized by the Holy See and the Chinese government. Some people said that Bishop Guo Xijin has a lofty attitude and faith. I don’t know much about it, so I cannot comment. But from the reports, at least, we are reminded self-emptying and putting the other at the

5 Chao, 《神学四讲》(Four Lectures on Theology) (1948). See Yanjing Research Institute, comp: 《赵紫宸文集》(Works of T.C. Chao), vol.2 (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2004), 535-537.

6 See Wang Weifan 汪维藩, “中国教会神学思考的特色” (Characteristics of Chinese Church theology), in *Nanjing Theological Review* No. 13 (1990): 33-35.

center is very important for the unity of Chinese Protestants. It would be difficult to have church unity without these qualities. As mentioned above, unity is not uniformity. The diversity of unity requires acceptance of others' differences, and these differences can exist harmoniously together, together becoming the body of Christ. As in a symphony orchestra, different instruments playing harmoniously together can produce a wonderful symphony.

4

Finally, I would like to say that the spirit of "harmony" in Chinese culture may be related to the unity of the Church. Chinese theologians mostly emphasize "reconciliation" and "harmony," which may be related to the spirit of "harmony or concord" in Chinese culture. It may be said that harmoniousness is one of the characteristics of Chinese Christian theology. Bishop K. H. Ting was always concerned about and invested in Theological Reconstruction and in 1998 he promoted the initiation of the movement for Theological Reconstruction. Bishop Ting advocated a theology of "Love," and committed himself to the goal of church and social harmony, sought to guide Christians to establish a faith and witness in harmony with God, with the other, and with society, and tried to instill the harmonious elements of Chinese culture into the Church's life of faith and theological thinking.

Wei Zhuomin 韦卓民 (Francis C.M. Wei) was a Christian scholar who was as famous as T.C. Chao in the first half of the 20th century. People praised them both saying, "In the south there is Wei and in the north, Chao." In his translation of the Confucian classic the *Doctrine of the Mean*, "the mean" is not translated as "sincerity", but as "harmony." This is very enlightening. In his opinion, "the way of heaven is sincere;

the way of man is sincere” should be translated as “harmony is the way of nature [heaven]; becoming harmony is the way of man.”⁷

Wei Zhuomin’s translation really holds the core value of “harmony” in Chinese culture. In his opinion, harmonious thought is a good summary of the golden mean. Through “harmony,” a person’s internal harmony and external harmony, truly shows the human nature of Confucianism. In the eyes of Confucianism, the universe is in order, and everything runs according to the laws of the universe; this is the essence of the universe. When the nature of all things is authentic, and faithfully develops the part that belongs to it, the order and law of the universe can take place. As long as all things remain true to their nature, the universe will be in harmony, and all things in the universe will benefit from this harmony. All parts of the universe work together by nature and working together is the mystery of the whole. The highest goal of human beings is the harmony of life, which is in harmony with the inner self, with others, and with the nature of the great universe.⁸ This understanding of the harmony of the universe also reminds us that the unity of the Church in China should be the unity of diversity. Different concepts, different understandings, or even differences in belief practice are exactly the way to achieve harmony, not an excuse for church division.

My response as I have set it down here is a bit disjointed and fragmentary. What I mainly want to express is that moving from the current “Uniting Church” to a truly United

7 Francis C.M. Wei, “A Study of the Chinese Moral Tradition and its Social Values,” (PhD Dissertation, University of London, 1929), 102. Quoted from Wu Derong 伍德荣, 《和谐神学: 从“南韦北赵”寻索中国基督教神学思想的根源与发展》(Harmonious theology: seeking the source and development of Chinese Christian theology in the work of C.M. Wei and C.T. Chao) (Joint Publishing (Hong Kong), 2018), 254.

8 Ibid., 254.

Church, is a distant vision for the Chinese Church. No matter what the burden of past history and the struggle of present reality, as long as we put down our burdens and strive to move forward, a fully united Chinese Church stands in the near or far future. The establishment of an ecclesiology of the Chinese Church is indispensable to achieving this goal. As for how to establish a Chinese Church ecclesiology, I think this is also a matter for our inquiries into the Sinicization of Christian theology.

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Reviewing K. H. Ting's Historical Mission: Theological Reconstruction*

重温丁光训主教论神学思想建设的历史使命

WEN GE 文革

Introduction

“带着信仰投身祖国前进的洪流”

“Plunge into the tide of the nation's advance with faith.”¹

Following forty years of reform and opening up, the development of the whole Chinese society has garnered world attention, and people's lives have changed dramatically. Remarkable things have been achieved. But how can Chinese Christianity meaningfully connect with this new era of socialism? How can the church, through its own thinking and organization-building display a new look in step with the times? How can the Chinese Church, through active social practice, make its own contribution to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and to building up the shared future of the human community?

* Paper delivered at the “Chinese Christian Symposium to Mark the 40th Anniversary of Reform and Opening Up, and the 20th Anniversary of Theological Reconstruction, Shanghai,” December 2018; with minor revisions.

1 K.H. Ting 丁光训, “今天我们向吴耀宗先生学习什么?” (What can we learn from Y.T. Wu Today?) (1989) in 《丁光训文集》 (Collected works of K.H. Ting) (1998), in *Love Never Ends, Papers by K.H. Ting*, trans. Theresa Chu Meifen, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 328. Unless otherwise noted, all English quotations of Bishop Ting's writings are taken from this volume.

Bishop K. H. Ting 丁光训 was an important leader in the Chinese Church, a theologian who paid close attention to reality and was in dialogue with the times. At the Jinan Conference twenty years ago, he actively promoted Theological Reconstruction, in the hope that Chinese Christianity might advance with the times and establish an independent and autonomous church with characteristics unique to its Chinese context. His hope was that Chinese churches, through promoting ethics in society, actively serving society, and loving and caring for people, could make a beautiful witness to our loving God, expressed in the Trinity, while making its own unique contribution to the development of the Church ecumenical.

This paper attempts, through a review of K. H. Ting's pertinent theological discourses, to reflect on and review the starting point, focus and ultimate goal of Theological Reconstruction in order to explore how Bishop Ting was able to be in dialogue with the times, and how his contextual theological heritage guides today's Church in responding to the questions raised at the beginning of this article, in hopes of helping Chinese Christians run today's church well, love their country and love the church, glorify God and benefit people, and build a Sinicized church.

Theological Reconstruction: The Starting Point

Although everyone regards the Jinan Conference as symbolic of the launching of Theological Reconstruction, Bishop Ting and Mr. Y. T. Wu 吴耀宗 began to discuss the issue of "theological reconstruction" or a "theological line" as early as the 1950s and 1960s.² One important reason they paid attention to this issue was the developments of the times and the changed situation. How could Christianity gain the

2 Ting, "先进的吴先生" (Forerunner Y.T. Wu), 80.

social foundation for its existence in a socialist country in the new era and embody the unique significance and value of its existence? This has always been one of the core issues in Theological Reconstruction. That Bishop Ting chose to answer this question from the perspective of realism can be regarded as an important entry point for his promotion of Theological Reconstruction.

Realism, as commonly understood, focuses mainly on present reality and concrete fact, while taking social reality as the important basis of concrete practice and theoretical reflection. It is the opposite of idealism, and the opposite path from that by which people emphasize that ideal concepts surpass reality. This kind of realism is against “solving political and economic issues only through Christian love and people’s good will,” while at the same time ignoring the social realities of self-interest and power issues.³ We can understand Bishop Ting’s realistic perspective by looking at the following three aspects.

First, Bishop Ting’s own turn toward theological realism benefited from the influence of Y. T. Wu. As early as the mid-1930s, when K. H. Ting was still studying theology at St. John’s University, what he was studying was Western theology as represented by the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith. The theological problems he considered were abstract ones, such as the two natures of Christ, human and divine, and Jesus Christ’s role in redemption. These were not directly related to the social reality of China at that time. Bishop Ting claimed that his intellectual position then was mainly one of Transcendentalism, focusing on the issue of personal salvation; however, he was upset by the Japanese invasion of Northeast China and the Kuomintang’s policy of

3 Robin W. Lovin, “Reinhold Niebuhr’s *The Nature and Destiny of Man*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, ed. Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 489.

non-resistance. He was also disgusted with his classmates' negative views on the national fate. Where was the way out? When he heard Mr. Wu's patriotic speeches, his thinking changed:

A Christology such as Y. T.'s which put Jesus back into his contemporary history as well as right within the realities of our own national conflicts struck a fresh, compelling note in my ears. It opened up before me a whole area I had not known to exist and hence had never entered, but which now summoned me. ... When I saw how closely Y. T.'s love for Christ and his concern for the well-being of the people were harmonized and how his loyalty to Christ generated in him a great passion for truth, for life's ideals and for the people, I, as a young man seeking something meaningful in life, felt inspired and sensed that a direction for my seeking had been pointed out to me.⁴

The incarnate Jesus entered human history and the specific social situation of the Jews in Jesus' time. Today's Christians and churches live in a similar specific social situation. Therefore, we need to follow Jesus' example and combine loyalty to the heavenly Father with the love for the nation. This is one of the theological principles that the Chinese Church later put forward as love for country and love for church.

Second, K. H. Ting's realistic position did not cause him to have idealistic hopes for the Church itself like some conservative Christians did. Since ancient times, some evangelical Christians have always felt that if everyone in the world could come to the Church and accept faith in Christ, then the world would naturally be better, and all kinds of human problems would be easily solved. From a historical point of view, when Christendom was at a height, Europe

4 Ting, "Forerunner Y.T. Wu," 74-75.

was still beset with complex social problems. Why? A realistic examination of human nature shows that the world and even the Church itself cannot rid us of the reality of sin in this world. Not only that, but there is also an important theological issue here—the relationship between the Church and the kingdom of God. The Church is not equivalent to the kingdom of God. In fact, the scope of the Church is smaller than that of the kingdom of God (*basileia tou theou*, reign of God refers to the God’s universal governance of the universe).⁵ Therefore, the mission of the Church in the world is not to establish a church state, nor is it, as Rauschenbusch and other social gospellers imagined, the idealistic idea to “Christianize society through Christ.”⁶ Rather, the Church’s mission in the world is to witness the kingdom of God that has already been in the hearts of Christians, and to make the Church the sign of God’s Kingdom in this world.

Bishop Ting was inspired by Liberation theology and that of Teilhard de Chardin. He pointed out that the real Church would not be a supranational organization that governs everything. The real Church would be salt in the world, but not turn the world into a large block of salt. “You are the salt of the earth; he did not say you must make this whole world into a large block of salt. He said, You are the yeast of the world, but you need not make the whole world into a large cake of yeast.”⁷ Therefore, Bishop Ting believed that the real development of the Church did not only depend on the number of believers, but also on improving the

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- 5 Ted Peters, *God: The World’s Future*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 272-73.
 - 6 See Philip Turner, *Christian Ethics and the Church: Ecclesial Foundations for Moral Thought and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 21-6.
 - 7 Ting, “来自解放神学，德日进神学和过程神学的启发” (Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin,” (1985), 209.

quality of believers and the ability of the Church to witness to the kingdom of God in different times.

Finally, Bishop Ting's realistic position is reflected in his looking at the Church from the point of view of social science: the Church, as a subsystem of society, cannot avoid the problem of social positioning. From a political point of view, if an atheist party is leading the whole nation in building socialism, is there any room for the theist Christian? From a sociological point of view, does Christianity always play a negative role in history and thus there is no longer a need for its existence in socialist countries? On the first question, K. H. Ting did not avoid the political reality of the Church itself. As a social reality, the Church does have the function of social integration, and indeed will have certain social influence. Therefore, the Church is bound to have a definite connection with social politics and social order. The Church does not exist in a vacuum, so in China, the Church cannot completely transcend politics, nor can it be apolitical.

As Bishop Ting said, Christians and theologians cannot completely depart from their own context nor disregard the social consequences of their theological views.⁸ Although many people believe there is no way theism and atheism can be ideologically harmonized, the Church in China can still work together with the ruling party and government politically for the common interests of the nation and the country, while respecting each other's faith and principles, as guided by our unique principle of the United Front.⁹ Moreover, with the prerequisite of preserving its spiritual transcendence, Christianity and socialism can also

8 Ting, "What Can We Learn from Y. T. Wu Today?" (1989), 328.

9 Ting, "在中国宗教界纪念中国抗日战争胜利五十周年座谈会上的发言" (Speech at the religious forum commemorating the 50th anniversary of victory over Japan) (1995), 488-489.

coordinate in building an ideal society of fraternity and justice.¹⁰

The above two aspects reflect the important “political alliance” mentioned by Bishop Ting.¹¹ In addition, through Theological Reconstruction, Bishop Ting needs to further eliminate the conservative theological concepts in the Church that are likely to conflict with social development, “so that the Chinese Church is experiencing a profound ideological change from the theme of belief/unbelief” to the theme of “love and harmony.”¹² In response to the second question, Bishop Ting pointed out that on the issue of religion as opiate, religion certainly has a negative function, but it also has positive functions. His dialectical understanding of religion’s social function is also based on his realistic standpoint. In terms of positive function, he pointed out that Christianity can still aid in the harmonious development of society in socialist China by means of social services, promoting religious morality, promoting democracy and involvement in education.¹³ To sum up, Christianity can not only continue to exist in socialist countries, but also can make its own contribution to the economic construction of the motherland and the construction of a harmonious society in the new era, thus reflecting the external significance and value of its own existence.

10 See my paper, “A Contemporary Reflection on the Social Theology of Bishop K. H. Ting in the Construction of the Chinese Church under Socialism,” “Proceedings of the Symposium on Sinicization of Christianity : Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Founding of the National Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee” (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 2015), 383-85.

11 See “Speech at the Religious Forum,” 488-489.

12 Luo Weihong 罗伟红, ed., 《中国基督教（新教）史》（History of Christianity (Protestantism) in China）(Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2016), 828-29.

13 Ting, “What Can We Learn,” 334.

Third, the focus of theological reconstruction

From the perspective of realism, Bishop Ting found legitimate space and justification for the existence of Christianity in socialist countries and called on Chinese Christians to actively participate in social construction. However, do all the efforts made by Christians in the construction process of the present age have permanent significance from the ultimate point of view? Will the kingdom of God finally come to destroy all the efforts of the world today, including the efforts of Christians? Here, Bishop Ting focuses on the theology of history (*Weltanschauung*), which can be regarded as a significant focus of Theological Reconstruction.

“Theology of history” is different from historical theology or the history of theology.¹⁴ Its main task is to explore the theological significance of history, the universal care of God in history and the divine plan of salvation. If the philosophy of history generally discusses the law of historical development, then the theology of history focuses on how God carried out his blessing and redemption in history, and on the interrelationship of current developments and the end of history. The incarnation, life in the world, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are important references for us to understand the theological significance of history. This is because Jesus Christ’s life clearly shows how the second person of the Trinity is physically present in history and shows God’s divine economy.

In contrast, Bishop Ting’s realistic perspective determines that the Chinese Church he has in mind should not pursue some next world, futuristic escape from history.

14 P.L. Hug, “History, Theology of,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 26-27.

On the contrary, the Chinese Church should have historical responsibility and actively shoulder the responsibility that God gave to the Chinese Church in historical development. Specifically, the Chinese Church should actively participate in social construction in the current historical stage, spread the gospel, serve the people, and witness to the kingdom of God. In this regard, Bishop Ting also benefited from Mr. Y. T. Wu's influence:

Not slighting but giving importance to history, picking history up from the dust, looking at it from the people's standpoint, finding in it the mission of Christians and our partners in the fulfillment of the mission—these were what made Y. T. Wu's approach different in theory and in practice from that of the other theological thinkers of those days. Compared with the liberation theology of Latin America today, Y. T.'s Christology and hermeneutics were not so well thought out and hence failed to reach such heights. But, as far as the pointing out of the direction is concerned, he was in a true sense a forerunner in the evolution ... of a Third World theology.¹⁵

Moreover, K. H. Ting's regard for history is consistent with the tradition of Chinese historical philosophy. Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳 points out that "China's spiritual world is based on history, and historical consciousness has the ability to construct all aspects of the spiritual world. Therefore, when we say history is both philosophy and belief, it is also literature, politics and ethics."¹⁶ He held that "History is neither a thing to discard nor a thing to duplicate. History has created the spirit's ability to extend, that is to say, it

15 Ting, "Forerunner Y.T. Wu, 76.

16 Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳, "中国从历史之道中继续生长"(Following the path of history China continues to grow) 《南风窗》 (Nanfeng chuang) No. 23 (2018): 46.

has created a kind of inner depth and breadth of spirit.”¹⁷ Similarly, facing history squarely can deepen and broaden the scope of theological thinking. Real Church development cannot surpass history, let alone escape from it; rather it should actively participate in history. This is the field of development of Bishop Ting’s theology. How then does he understand the theological significance of history?

First of all, history is God’s own narrative (His-tory), a history in which God Godself participates. When expounding the theology of de Chardin, Bishop Ting emphasized this point in particular: In the mind of de Chardin, the whole of history is not entirely the history of human beings. History is from the beginning of creation to the end of history. Most of the time in history there were no human beings. Man is just an animal in the long history of “the last few minutes.” According to de Chardin, the whole history, or the whole time, is the history of God’s efforts to achieve God’s goals.”¹⁸ God does not exist only in the other world, God is not a God far distant from human beings. God is both transcendent and in the world. God continues to create, redeem and sanctify with Jesus Christ (see John 5:17). The gradual revelation of God also unfolds in such a historical process. Not only that, since history is the medium of God’s work, we should try our best to recognize God’s actions in history, examine God’s will, respond to God with faith, become God’s co-worker, and promote the development of history to God’s original creation goal through practice.

What then was God’s original goal in creating all things? This involves the second aspect of K. H. Ting’s theology of history. The end of historical development (*ta eschata*) is known as eschatology or finality in Christian theology. Professor Chen Zemin 陈泽民 felt that Bishop

17 Ibid., 49.

18 Ting, “Inspirations,” 198.

Ting's ultimate theory absorbed Whitehead's "process theology" and de Chardin's evolutionary thinking, ... regarding the ultimate consummation of the cosmos ... as the whole process of God's work through Christ.¹⁹ At that moment, for the individual, Bishop Ting believed that the completion of creation and redemption pointed to a new being in Christ, just as Paul says in the Bible (see 2 Cor. 5:17), the representative of this future new being (*homo futuris*) is Jesus Christ. By comparison, man is only a semi-finished product in the process of God's creation, but ultimately all had to grow into the pattern of Jesus Christ, "we can envisage Christ as a full circle, and we human beings as arcs, long or short, that comprise it."²⁰

And not only that, the new human can make good use of free will to achieve full "autonomy and the ability to take care of oneself," and friendship and fellowship with God through love.²¹ As far as the human community is concerned, the ultimate result of God's creation, redemption and sanctification is an expanded Trinitarian community of love, which is the realization of the third stage of evolution proposed by de Chardin, that is, the completion of a community of love.²² This ultimate, loving community is a large one. When this happens, the individual and the community reach a high degree of unity.²³ By contrast, the ultimate community of love has not yet been realized and is still in the process of forming.

Finally, what does the omega point of history have to do with people's lives and efforts? This is a question of the

19 Chen Zemin 陈泽民, "前言(Foreword: Faith's Journey)," in *Love Never Ends*, 6.

20 Ting, "On Ultimate Questions" (1985), 238.

21 "Inspirations," 199.

22 *Ibid.*, 198, 201, 203.

23 *Ibid.*, 198.

relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate. Bishop Ting believes that the perfect loving community of the Kingdom of Heaven and humanity and the world still be developing at that moment and will not be dissolved but will be continuous. On the one hand, this continuity is reflected in the fact that the Three-in-One God is still carrying out the work of creation, redemption and sanctification. Despite the fact of the human fall and sin in history, God did not give up on the world. (Bishop Ting did not understand God's transcendence as the distance between God and the world, but as God's endless love for all creatures.) Through the Cosmic Christ, God makes known God's cosmic creation and governing love. On the other hand, this continuity is reflected in the fact that people inside and outside the church are all within this process of God's continuous creation, redemption and sanctification. All truth, goodness and beauty human beings achieve is from God—the Father of all light, who gave all beauty, goodness and grace to us. Since what human hands do, and all things of value come from God's own work, thus in God's future kingdom, all that is good will be preserved. As Bishop Ting recalled, Mr. Wu pointed out to him:

One that occasion Y. T. said that the coming of the Kingdom of God was a hope beyond history and that he would not equate new China with the Kingdom or think of it as reaching directly to the Kingdom. However, Y. T. stressed even more strongly that this hope on the part of Christians was not to lead us into disregarding our tasks within history. The fulfillment of historical tasks and the realization of the superhistorical hope were not unrelated entities. To clarify how they were related was to Y. T. a theological assignment the times had given to us. Y. T.'s point, in my understanding, was comparable to the thinking in terms of the ultimate and the penultimate which I was encountering in Europe in those theologians who wished to be true to the faith and at the

same time get involved in the world. In those remarks of Y. T.'s there were already germinal the thoughts which Chinese Christians later summarized with four characters 爱国爱教 (aiguo aijiao) love our motherland and love Christianity.²⁴

In view of this, Chinese Christians should face history squarely, participate in the construction of our current society, and cooperate with others to actively strive for the prosperity of the nation and the common interests of humankind, because these efforts are not in vain but will be kept in the kingdom of God. In a word, precisely because heaven and the world are continuous, there is no so-called opposition between the holy and the secular, so the active entry of Christians into the world has important practical significance.

In a word, Bishop Ting's understanding of historical theology is an important focus of Theological Reconstruction. It eliminates the ideological obstacles to Chinese Christians' active participation in the world and the construction of the motherland; it also encourages Christians to pay attention to God's own actions in history, and strive to become co-workers in God's continuous creative work, responding to God's love and grace for humankind with practical action. Bishop Ting even referenced the words and deeds of German theologian D. Bonhoeffer to inspire Chinese Christians: "The Christian has no last line of escape from earthly tasks and difficulties into the eternal..."²⁵ Christians must face the present from a realistic standpoint. In this regard, Bishop Ting believes that Mr. Y. T. Wu has made pioneering contributions:

24 "Forerunner Y.T. Wu," 77-78.

25 "What Can We Learn," 332.

Y. T. Wu was helpful to Christians theologically in broadening their perspective, turning them from a contempt for the world and history to seeing their importance, from alienation from human beings and lack of concern for their welfare to loving them and caring for their welfare, and in finding in the world, aside from the opposition of faith and unfaith, also that of goodness and evil, justice and injustice, progress in historical terms and reaction. All of this plays a liberating role in the thinking of those who want to keep to the Christian faith and yet move towards realities and towards love of the motherland.²⁶

Bishop Ting's contribution was to draw on the theology of de Chardin and process theology to augment and demonstrate Y. T. Wu's guiding thought, thus providing a specific theological basis for Christians to love the country and the church and serve the people. Li Pingye 李平焯 summed up Bishop Ting's thinking on engaging with the world as follows: "Christianity is a spiritual culture that guides people's view of life and engagement with reality... The historical course of human progress reflects God's will to save humanity. Therefore, Christians should actively join in all undertakings for human progress."²⁷ This summary expresses an important focal point of Theological Reconstruction.

The ultimate goal of Theological Reconstruction

After pointing out that a realistic perspective is the entry point for Theological Reconstruction, and that historical

26 "Forerunner," 82.

27 Li Pingye 李平焯, "信仰不同, 但我们是朋友—我所认识的丁光训主教"(Of different faiths, but friends: the Bishop Ting I know), in 《天风甘雨——中国基督教领袖丁光训》(Heavenly wind, timely rain), ed. Liu Huajun 刘华俊 (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2001), 59.

theology is its focal point, we should see that the ultimate goal of Theological Reconstruction, as Bishop Ting began to consider it in the 1950s, is to realize the localization of Christianity, that is, Sinicization. Why?

In 2000, in his “My View of the Last 50 Years” Bishop Ting divided Three-Self into 3 stages: In the first stage, the task is to realize the independence and autonomy of Chinese Church sovereignty; in the second stage, the task is to run the church well; in the third stage, the important task is Theological Reconstruction, which is the “highest and most important stage” of the TSPM, as well as its deepening, which is “theological substantiation” of the first two stages. The three stages are not “unrelated,” but interconnected.²⁸ In other words, the fundamental goals and objectives of the three stages are the same. Through active dialogue with the changing situation, he made a coherent interpretation of the historical significance of the task of the TSPM at different stages of the development of new China.

Thinking about the significance of the TSPM in the new era in the early days of church reopening in 1982, Bishop Ting pointed out that Three-Self truly “has another significant pioneering or breakthrough nature in the history of the worldwide Church in two senses”: first, from a regional perspective, Chinese Christianity in the East is striving “at a relatively fast speed and with greater depth to achieve localization”; second, from the perspective of China’s specific historical context and political system, Christianity in China is realizing its own localization in a rapidly developing society:

28 K. H. Ting, “我怎样看这五十年？”(My View of the Last Fifty Years), in 《中国基督教三自爱国运动文选 (1993-2006)》(Anthology of the Chinese Christian Patriotic Movement (1993-2006), Luo Guanzong, ed., Vol. 2 (Shanghai: CCC&TSPM, 2007), 248-49. English version in *A Chinese Contribution to Ecumenical Theology: Selected Writings of Bishop K. H. Ting*, Janice and Philip Wickeri, eds. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 111-113.

Historically, since the appearance of this new thing called socialism, in a society with a history of several thousand years of feudalism and over one hundred years of semi-colonialism; at a time when several hundred million people, having gone through a long serious trial so that even today they are carrying its wounds, are anxious to bring about more changes and are using both hands to construct a new life under socialism; at a time when industrial and agricultural production, cultural thinking, morality and the spiritual life are all undergoing changes and present China with a rich, colorful and very lovely new prospect; in an environment where many new things are so inspiring even as there are old things which still cause people to sigh; Christians, numbering very few in the whole population, are consciously trying to root Christianity in the soil of their land, so that new qualities will spring forth. This has never happened before in history. This is the unique characteristic of the mission of our Chinese Christians. Our success will strengthen the faith many people in China and in the world have in Christ and in the Church. Our failure would be their loss.²⁹

Bishop Ting pointed out clearly that the “pioneering or breakthrough nature of the TSPM is to realize the indigenization of Christianity, that is, its Sinicization. In fact, this formulation of indigenization as used here appears one year earlier than the frequently quoted “for thirty years we have spared no pains to Sinicize the church in China.” The original text of his 1983 speech in English at the Geneva center of the WCC reads “to make the church in China Chinese.”³⁰ To be Chinese is the unique historical mission of Chinese Christians at present and the goal that Chinese churches should strive to promote and expect to

29 “Another Look at Three-Self” (1982), 93.

30 See Address at Worship...117 (1983).

achieve as soon as possible. Bishop Ting also believed that if Christianity can be Sinicized in China, a socialist country, it will strengthen the faith in Christ of many in the world and make important contributions to the Church ecumenical. Therefore, as an important stage of deepening and expansion of the TSPM, the goal of Theological Reconstruction remains a Sinicized Christianity.

How to build a Chinese Christianity? As early as 1981, Bishop Ting pointed out that after Chinese Christianity had achieved autonomy organizationally, financially and politically, Three-Self had a more important task: it was necessary to move forward on the theological front and break the fetters of "outmoded ways," and shed "old and Western stuff" in their life of worship; also "the next 30 years will be a period of deepening development of the TSPM toward culture."³¹ Bishop Ting also termed it the cultural construction of Chinese Christianity, whose aim was that "the radiance of Christ can beam through the prism of national culture and come out with a brilliance all its own." Moreover, "The people will only feel at home in the presence of this brilliance, and Christians the world over will be enriched by it in their knowledge of the riches that are in Christ. It is only thus that we can speak of the 'contribution' of a local church to other churches."³²

On the one hand, Bishop Ting pointed out that Chinese Christianity should permeate Chinese culture, such that Chinese people would no longer regard Christianity as a foreign religion. Then we can get Chinese people to realize Christianity is fair and reasonable in the Chinese context and understand its appeal. On the other hand, Bishop Ting stressed the relationship between the local and universal nature of Christianity: it is not necessary to sever our ties

31 "Forerunner," 79.

32 Ibid.

with the Church universal in order to build an indigenized Christianity. On the contrary, only by establishing a local Church combining universality and national culture can the universality of the Church be truly enriched.³³

Moreover, in relation to socialism, Bishop Ting also stressed that to build a contextual Church in China, stressing ethics and morality is the best place to start. This will not only reflect the superiority of Christianity itself, but is also consistent with the ethical characteristics of traditional Chinese culture and religion,³⁴ and more in line with the core socialist values advocated by China at present. Although Bishop Ting did not have time to establish a complete system, the essentials of the construction of a localized Christianity is basically reflected in his theological framework, though I will not expand on this here.

In a word, construction of such a Sinicized Church is in line with the historical pattern of development in the Church, and it is through its efforts to localize and contextualize that the church realizes its catholicity. The ultimate goal of Theological Reconstruction is to promote the emergence of such a Sinicized Church: on the one hand, building up the church requires “greater compatibility between our church and socialism. But, what the church does must first of all be compatible with God’s loving purpose, with the teachings of the Bible, with the nature of the Church as Church, and with the rightful wishes of the masses of our Christians.”³⁵ On the other hand, the Church can call on Christians to join in with faith in the torrent of national rejuvenation; we should actively participate in China’s economic, social, cultural and ecological civilization construction to become co-workers

33 Ting, “三自为何必要?” (Rationale for Three-Self) (1984), 132.

34 Ting “What Can We Learn,” 330; “On a Profound Christian Question” (1996), 510.

35 Ting, “走出一条新路来” (Taking a new way) (1988), 307.

in God's continuous creative work and witness to God's kingdom. In this way, the substance and function of the Church will be unified in the direction of Sinicization.

Conclusion

Bishop K. H. Ting was a theologian in dialogue with the times and one who kept developing and advancing with the times. Philip L. Wickeri 魏克利 pointed out that although the times were changing, Bishop Ting's basic way of thinking about theology had not changed since the 1940s, and the core theological themes he had (always) been thinking about remained basically the same.³⁶ The Theological Reconstruction he promoted allowed the church in China to turn toward social reality. His theological thought on history enabled the Chinese Church to be brave enough to bear historical and social responsibility. He regarded the construction of an indigenous Chinese Christianity as the ultimate purpose of Theological Reconstruction. As he pointed out, the internal task for the Chinese Church today is to "seek the selfhood of Chinese Christianity," and its external task is to "elevate the image of Christianity as a Chinese religion."³⁷ In today's new era of socialism, it is the historical responsibility of the Church to strive to realize the mission of the Sinicization of Christianity.

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36 Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 246-47.

37 Ting, "An Update on the Church in China" (1994), 458.

An Approach to Biblical Exegesis for Evangelical Women: The Story of Dinah in Genesis 34

福音派妇女释经的进路：以《创世纪》第34章
底拿的故事为例

MENG YANLING 孟艳玲

It has to be said that feminist Bible interpretation is a kind of challenge to traditional evangelical Bible interpretation. But for us, this challenge cannot be simply ignored or denied. The issue is how we might maintain the authority of the biblical canon while taking seriously the patriarchalism and male centeredness of the Bible. This paper first presents a brief introduction to feminist scripture interpretation, then focuses on Genesis 34 as an example to study the biblical text and its interpretation history in combination with the feminist method of exegesis. It will also highlight the attention given to Genesis 34 by feminist theologians who have reinterpreted the chapter from the perspective of women who have been marginalized or suffered sexual violence, in the hope that readers may see the benefits of reading and interpreting the Bible using the methods of feminist interpretation, and discover the feasibility of evangelical women's interpretation as well as the light and harvest it brings.

A Brief History of Feminist Bible Interpretation

Development

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

An important starting point in the history of feminist interpretation of scriptures is Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*. This work did not originate as the result of a movement of religious reform, but from feminist demands for women's suffrage in the 19th century, when women demanded the same voting rights as men. It was thus in conflict with conservative religious beliefs. The greatest resistance to women's suffrage came from the Church, which enjoyed political influence at the time. Female believers in those days basically believed that the role of women should be obedience, humility and forbearance. They should not strive for equality with men in anything. Elizabeth Cady Stanton held the view that there was something wrong with the Church's teaching. She concluded that: first, the Bible is not a neutral text, but a text centered on patriarchy and men; and second, the Church's interpretation of the Bible is problematic, because throughout the history of exegesis, men had been the main interpreters and had fundamentally ignored women's voices and views. Stanton's opinion was extremely shocking and challenging to Church tradition in her day. At the same time, it was at her provocation that the historical curtain was raised on the movement for feminist exegesis in the late 19th century.

As the name suggests, feminist interpretation of scriptures is based on women's experience. Taking into account women's situation and experience, how can the Bible become a resource to support women's quest for liberation? Biblical writings and commentaries on the Bible have basically been done by men. How can women break through these limits? Below we consider other pioneering

figures in the history of feminist exegesis, whose efforts laid the foundation for its development.

Katharine Doob Sakenfeld

Sakenfeld summed up four basic principles for dealing with biblical texts on the basis of women's experience.¹ She attempted to classify some approaches to proceeding in feminist exegesis. Strictly speaking, she just provided some basis for later thinking:

- a) Focus on positive, encouraging and affirmative stories and texts about women to counter negative examples.
- b) Take a comprehensive approach to the whole Bible to establish a principle of human freedom as the standard of scripture interpretation.
- c) Use the method of comparative cultures to examine the similarities and differences of women's lives in the Biblical era and in modern times in order to analyze and study the patriarchy.
- d) Question the absolute authority of certain biblical texts.

Phyllis Tribble

Another important pioneer of feminist exegesis is Phyllis Tribble. She provided important avenues of thinking about feminist exegesis and carried out practical and concrete exegetical practice. She summed up the basic elements of feminist interpretation thus:

1 Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Feminist Uses of Biblical Materials," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Letty Russell, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 55-64.

- a) Investigate the social culture of the biblical age, especially its social reality in which men were superior to women.
- b) Pay attention to the stories of the forgotten women of the Bible, especially those who became victims in the biblical narrative.
- c) Redefine the image of God, eliminating the use of a masculine vocabulary, and developing a more inclusive language.

Trible's most representative work is her *Texts of Terror*,² published in 1984, which opens a new dimension in women's interpretation of scriptures. She attached particular importance to the discrimination against, abuse and subordination of women in the Bible. She reinterprets the horror stories concerning women in the Bible from the perspective of women who suffered oppression in order to remember women who have suffered in the past and suffer in the present. She emphasizes using the textual criticism method to undertake analysis of the basis of the text. She tries to use research into the original biblical texts and background culture to bring readers a richer understanding of the role and situation of women at the time, that they may better understand the suffering of the women in these terror texts. The purpose of re-reading and excavating women's tragic stories is to give voice to the grievances of the women who have suffered in the past, and in the present, to call for vigilance, so that such tragic stories will no longer be replayed.

Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza

Trible concentrated on Old Testament exegesis. The

2 Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of the Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

equally well-known feminist theologian Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza differed from Tribble in her focus on the New Testament. In 1984, Schüssler-Fiorenza published her representative work *In Memory of Her*,³ another highly important work in the history of feminist biblical exegesis. The title is taken from Mark's Gospel, chapter 14, the story of the woman who anoints the Lord with ointment, "Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (Mark 14:9).

In Mark's telling of Jesus' passion, three persons figure especially prominently: Judas, who betrayed Jesus, Peter, who denied Jesus three times, and the woman who anointed him with costly ointment. Yet, though Judas and Peter were well remembered by Mark's community, not even the woman's name is mentioned. But Jesus' very clear words make a mockery of this: "wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her." Schüssler-Fiorenza's stance is that if what a central female follower of Jesus did has not been remembered, we have no way to preach the gospel. We must thank Schüssler-Fiorenza for her sensitivity to Jesus's words. She holds that what is recorded in the biblical text shows gender bias, that it is male centered. Today we can reconstruct women's stories through the incomplete and fragmentary records of women in the Bible. She thus proposed "historical reconstruction." The main purpose is to reconstruct the history of women in early Christianity, (so) women become an important part of the Christian tradition; and to redevelop, that is, to reconstruct a history in which women are struggling and making great contributions in the process of the establishment, dissemination and

3 Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984).

development of Christianity. She reasserts that the history of Christianity belongs to both men and women. What is most controversial about her is that her principle of biblical interpretation comes not from the biblical text itself, but from the efforts of women today for liberation. She believes that only those texts that challenge and criticize patriarchal culture deserve to be seen as theologically enlightening.

Types of Feminist Exegesis

Feminist exegesis is a very broad concept, for the differences in standpoint of the interpreters, as well as the methodology of feminist exegesis and conclusions are also mutually distinct. According to Carolyn Osiek, feminist exegesis can be divided into five basic typologies.⁴

a) Rejectionist: This position rejects biblical authority, along with its associated Christian tradition, if that Christian tradition is incapable of alteration.

b) Loyalist: Under no circumstances can the Bible be rejected. For the loyalist position, two possibilities exist: to use non-oppressive means to reinterpret those passages that “suppress” women, with the view that the problem is not with the text itself, but rather with the reader. Strictly speaking, this is not a feminist position.

c) Revisionist: The Bible and the Christian tradition were created in a patriarchal culture but are not essentially patriarchal and can be restored. The latent female voices hidden in the biblical text and tradition can be uncovered through research into linguistic, rhetorical and narrative evidence, and (we) must to the best of our ability reconstruct

4 Carolyn Osiek, “The Feminist and the Bible: Hermeneutical Alternatives,” in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*, A.Y. Collins, ed. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 93-106.

the lives of ordinary women in Israel in various eras. One path is to do one's best to study neglected biblical passages that take a positive view of women.

d) Sublimationist: Feminist theology, as a discipline full of life and nourishment, is worthy of praise and both God and church are described using feminine images.

e) Liberationist: When we study the Bible, we usually criticize patriarchy from the perspective of theology. The central message of the Bible, from an eschatological point of view, is to promote human liberation (i.e., the new creation, Shalom, the prophetic critique of oppression). Letty Russell discovered that the basic principle and intention of the Bible is that "it is God's desire to mend creation."⁵ This became the message of her Liberation theology. Rosemary Radford Reuther, criticized patriarchal culture from the perspective of the prophets of Israel.⁶ Both Russell and Reuther began from a feminist ideology outside the biblical text, and brought this thinking to the text, in the hope that the principles of feminist theology could open up a dialogue with the biblical text.

Clearly, the rejectionist and the loyalist positions have been seen as two rather extreme stances, they are mutually opposed and cannot be reconciled. But the others—revisionist, sublimationist and liberationist—can be combined and mutually utilized. These three all emphasize the patriarchal and male centeredness issue in the biblical text, in order to reveal the general neglect of women, or to see that the story is told from a male point of view and

5 Letty Russell, "Feminist Interpretation," in *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honour of Letty Russell*, M. Farley and S. Jones, eds. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1999), 138.

6 Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 1983).

then to use the different approach of feminist exegesis to interpret the Bible.

Three levels of women's interpretation

Relations between the sexes in scripture

Simply put, to interpret a passage from a feminist perspective, we need to discover how the gender relationship is represented by the passage, what gender roles and value orientation are shown in the message of the text. We must look at how the Scripture constructs gender, how it talks about women, how it talks about men, and how women and men are each restricted to one frame as (the story) develops. As the Book of Ruth begins, Naomi is living in Moab with her husband. When Ruth returns with Naomi, Naomi finds a husband and home for Ruth to depend on, the scripture reflecting that women should depend on men, through marriage and childbirth. The same is true of Hagar and Sarah, two women who quarrel over their position and power in their husband's house. Hagar's role was originally to be a means of childbearing. When Sarah complained about Hagar to Abraham and bullied her, Abraham's response was "I leave it to you." Men's roles are clear. They don't need to be responsible for women, but women are fighting for the benefits that come from men.

Rediscovering the female subject

Tamar in Genesis 38, Rahab the prostitute in Joshua 2, and women like Ruth and Esther are examples of female subjects. Through reading the scriptures we can discover the universal gender values of the time, and how women could change these patterns of a male-dominated world and find a way out. As a woman, Ruth had to leave her hometown, give up her God, make others' hometown her own, worship the local god, follow the local customs, fulfill the local laws, and

fully participate in the local community: these things would be impossible for men (at the time). No matter where a man went, he must be sure of his land, property, identity or name, and seek (this) continuity unto death. Women, instead, can go to different places and combine other traditions with their own. Ruth was obviously limited by patriarchy. She took the initiative in the established value system. After returning to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, she took the initiative to pick up wheat ears in the field and find a life for herself and her mother-in-law. Naomi planned an opportunity for Ruth and herself to emancipate themselves and change their destiny. As a result, the two women changed their fate together. Thus, in a world dominated by men, women are not merely subordinated and manipulated, but have their own ideas and the ability to change their fate.

Reconstruction of the submerged female tradition. (The story of Dinah)

Society in biblical times was one in which men were superior to women. The biblical writers were bound to be influenced by their culture. Consciously or unconsciously the biblical texts always ignore women's voices and positions. In the story of Dinah in Genesis 34, the text ignores her. Dinah's thoughts and feelings were completely drowned out by the male voice. And in the long history of exegesis, men, as the dominant exegetes, shared the male position and defended interpreting Dinah's story from the standpoint of male interests. One of the tasks of women's exegesis today, then, is to explore the drowned voices of women in Bible texts, and to challenge the male-dominated exegetical tradition with its long history.

The Example of Genesis 34: The Story of Dinah

Most feminists read the scriptures either against the Bible itself or against the male centered interpreters of

the past. Both evangelical and radical women theologians are critical of the male centered history of hermeneutic experience. But the attitude of evangelical women's exegesis towards the Bible text is affirmative and respectful. For though Scripture is the revelation of God, it cannot be separated from the background and culture of the times. Ancient Israel was male centered, and the biblical text was the product of its times and did not intentionally discriminate against women. The affirmative and respectful approach to exegesis on the part of evangelical women does not lead to a critique of the Bible itself, but to an attempt to interpret the text from different perspectives.

Reflection on the history of male centered interpretation

When we read the history of the interpretation of Chapter 34 of Genesis, we will be shocked to find that male exegetes are less interested in focusing on the core of the story, than in focusing their attention on some minor details in Genesis 34:1. "Dinah went out to see the women of the land" became the chief concern for both Jews and Christians.

In today's society, although there is still a culture of serious male centralism in some regions or ethnic groups, generally speaking, the situation of male superiority and female inferiority has largely changed, and most women are independent and self-reliant financially and in spirit. In this feminist sense, when we read the story of Dinah in Chapter 34 of Genesis, our first feeling is that Dinah is a victim, and we will be filled with sympathy and compassion for her. However, when we study past exegesis, we will discover a shocking fact; there was no sympathy for Dinah and she was in fact often criticized. Even many Bible interpreters hold Dinah responsible for the massacre. This is because historically interpreters of the Bible were often men, and the history of church was also a history of men as superior to women. Augustine, a famous theologian with considerable

influence in the history of the Church, lived with two prostitutes and had a son before he was called to be God's servant. Later when he examined his past degenerate life, he decided that the source of his degeneracy was women. After he was called, he kept women at a distance and held that women were the source of calamity.

The Church's discrimination against women did not diminish during the Middle Ages, but increased. In theology, medicine and science, the idea that women were by nature inferior was expounded; only women who became nuns were worthy of respect. Clearly biblical interpretation set against this cultural backdrop would be marked by features plainly biased against women. Dinah, a victim, actually became an object of censure for many. In fact, women fared no better in Chinese history. Ancient male centered culture put the blame for the ruination of country and family on beautiful women. The Shang dynasty King's concubine, Da Ji, was blamed for the destruction of the dynasty, demonized as a vicious beauty, a wanton evil of the ages, an arch criminal. The demise of the Western Zhou was blamed on Bao Si, when in fact King Zhou You was not right in the head even before Bao Si entered the palace. Furthermore, other than being the object of King Zhou You's affections, Bao Si actually had almost no other faults. And Yang Guifei was a "femme fatale," who was thought to have caused the An-Shi Rebellion (755-763), sending the Tang dynasty into decline.

But what, in fact, did the destruction of country and nation have to do with these weak women? These things happened mainly because the kings who held supreme power were fatuous, unrestrained and careless. These weaker women became the victims of the situation that prevailed in their times and were pushed to their tragic deaths by politics and war. China's ancient history is also one of male superiority over women. These weaker women bore responsibility and infamy that was not their due; they

took the blame for these incompetent and wanton rulers. Fortunately, some scholars have come to the aid of these innocent women by rethinking and reshaping history. Dinah too was blamed for the massacre perpetrated by her brothers, representative of the history of sexual centralism. Dinah is through and through a victim, but in the history of male exegesis, she has become the culprit.

Past exegesis focused on the first verse of chapter 34 of Genesis. "Dinah went out to visit the women of the land" and this became the chief concern of Jews and Christians. Hamilton translates 34:1 as "Leah had her daughter by Jacob, Dinah, go out "to be seen" (implying to be seen by men) among the women of the land."⁷ In the word order in the Hebrew text of the Bible, the word "see" is the Qal (infinitive) form, followed closely here by "among the women." Because the prefix is added to the word "women," Hamilton thought that the form of "look/see" was exceptional, so he translated the combination into the passive "be seen." But there is no strong theoretical basis for Hamilton's inference. The Qal infinitive form of "look" is used 111 times in the Old Testament and these have been translated into active forms according to the norms of Hebrew grammar; there are no obvious examples that should be translated into passive forms. If one wants to express passive meaning, the most appropriate way is to use the infinitive of Niphal. Because the translation of the prefix used is very flexible and has many meanings, scholars' opinion is that if we want to emphasize the prefix on the word "women," the best translation would be "among some women," instead of violating the basic law of Hebrew grammar by using the passive. In Genesis 34:1 "Dinah, the daughter Leah bore to Jacob, went out to see (or visit) some of the women of the region." So this verse does

7 G. Charles Aalders, *Genesis, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 154, 159.

not imply that Dinah intended to go out and be seen by the local men.

Reading the history of the interpretation of Chapter 34 of Genesis, we discover that there is little interest in the narrator. Rather, exegetes tend to focus on the word “go out,” another verb in Genesis 34:1 that has become the focus of attention by male exegetes. “Leah sent Dinah, the daughter she bore by Jacob out to see the women of the region.” According to Nahum M. Sarna, the Hebrew root of the word “go out” means flirtatiousness, flirtatious promiscuity.⁸ Jacob Neusner also commented that when used for women, the verb meant prostitution. Gordon Wenham referred to the word “go out” as found in Article 141 of the Hammurabi Code, and the Akkadian cognate “wasu” as describing a housewife’s improper behavior outside the house. In the later version of the Hebrew Scripture *Targums*, a “religious prostitute” is translated as “a person who goes out to the countryside.”⁹ Sometimes the word has a negative meaning, but its meaning is not invariable, and thus the sense as used by the author of Genesis chapter 34 is not necessarily negative. In the Qal form, the usages that pertain to women can be classified as follows:

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- 8 Jerome, *Letter CVII*, 6, XXII.25; Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 93; John Calvin, *A Commentary on Genesis*, ed. J King (London: Banner of Truth, 1965) (written 1554), 218; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*, 124-25; Ancrene Wisse, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 68-69.
- 9 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*, ed. G.R. Evans (New York: Paulist Press, 1987; written 1125), 124; Ancrene Wisse, *Anchoritic Spirituality* (written betw 1200 and 1230), ed. Savage and N. Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 68. John Calvin, *A Commentary on Genesis*, ed. J King (London: Banner of Truth, 1965) (written 1554), 218.

(1) the word “go out” has been used 1068 times in the Bible, generally meaning simply “going out” from one place to another, and this is the same with regard to women. Genesis 24:13 records that the women went out to draw water. In Exodus 15:20 the prophet Miriam, the older sister of Aaron, went out and all the women went with her and danced to the beat of the drum she carried. “Go out” does not imply inappropriate behavior. “Go out” was also used with regard to Leah (Genesis 30:16), Dinah (Genesis 34:1), Jael (Judges 4:18, 22) and Michal (2 Samuel 6:20).

(2) The word also has other uses. With reference to women, going out can mean divorce (Deuteronomy 24:2). Sometimes it refers to gaining freedom from slavery (Exodus 21:3, 7, 11).

(3) The only time in the Old Testament that “going out” is connected with being a prostitute, is recorded in Proverbs, where the prostitute comes out to meet the youth. “Then a woman comes toward him, decked out like a prostitute, wily of heart” (Proverbs 7:10). “So now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you!” (Proverbs 7:15).

(4) The *Genesis Rabbah*, thought to have been written between the years 300-500 CE, is the ancient rabbis’ interpretation of Genesis. It, along with the later commentary, Rashi, interprets Leah’s “going out” to meet Jacob as sharing a room, which suggests having intercourse with him, as the purpose of Dinah’s going out, but of course this type of connection is not convincing. First of all, Leah’s “going out” to meet Jacob is just a preparatory stage. Moreover, Leah married Jacob, and it was lawful for her to share a room with him. Leah’s “going out” is not comparable to Dinah’s “going out.” Charles Aalders’ 1981 commentary on Genesis speculates that “we can infer that Dinah’s nature is one eager to be seen by men in that city. Dinah was so reckless in exposing herself to the men of the pagan city.

This fact, Dinah's mistake, is bigger than that of anyone [else] who got involved in it."¹⁰

It can be seen from the above examples that the word "go out" is most often used in reference to women without implying that they are engaged in sexual immorality or promiscuity in pagan rites. It is entirely about what women go out to do and need not be meant in a negative sense. In the past, many interpreters focused on the issue of whether Dinah should have gone out alone. Among them were Martin Luther, John Calvin and St. Jerome (Hieronymus), who often interpreted chapter 34 of Genesis from the perspective and interests of men.¹¹ John Calvin and others blame Dinah for the massacre.¹² Martin Luther also thought that it was a kind of disobedience against her father.¹³ Even more outrageously, some commentators believe that Dinah's sin lies in enjoying her illegitimate relationship with Shechem.¹⁴ What these traditional exegetes see is not the suffering and disaster Dinah experiences, but the accusation against a weak woman who suffered sexual violence. Of course, there are other people who have a little sympathy for Dinah. They feel it was her parents allowed her behavior, so they

10 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 6 (St. Louis: Concordia & Philadelphia, 1986) (written 1542/43), 187-88.

11 J.A. Schroeder, "The Rape of Dinah: Luther's Interpretation of a Biblical Narrative," in *Sixteenth Century Journal* XXVIII/3 (1997): 779-80; *Genesis Rabbah* LXXX:XI.

12 A. Thisleton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1992), 442-43.

13 C. Exum, "Murder They Wrote: Ideology and the Manipulation of Female Presence in Biblical Narrative," in *The Pleasure of Her Text*, ed. A. Bach (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 59.

14 Ita Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion: A Biblical Parable for Our Time* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 94; Nehama Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 47.

criticize Jacob for letting Dinah go out alone. The traditional interpretation focuses not on the harm that Dinah suffered, but on whether she should have gone out or not. This reading brings out two ethical teachings: first, in order to be safe, parents should make sure their daughters stay at home. Second, women should avoid curiosity and not go out alone, so as not to be seen by men. We can agree that in the society of the time, as a beautiful young woman going out into a foreign environment, Dinah might have been naive or might not have thought things through thoroughly, but we do not agree with some that Dinah was deliberately provocative, or actually enjoyed such sexual violence.

From the above examples, we can see that “going out” does not necessarily have a negative meaning when it is used in reference to women. Most of the time, used in reference to women, the term carries no suggestion of blame, but is simply descriptive of women going out to do something. Perhaps the closest thing to the history of traditional male centered interpretation is Proverbs 7:10,15, which records a prostitute who goes out to seduce men. But we know that Dinah went out to seek the women of the region, not the men.

The rabbis of the *Genesis Rabbah* and later commentaries like the *Rashi*, were put in mind of Dinah’s going out from Leah’s going out to have sex with Jacob. Of course, such connections are not convincing. First of all, it is not appropriate to connect Leah’s behavior with prostitutes. She married Jacob. Second, Genesis 30:16 is not about sex. Leah proposed to share Jacob’s bed, but this “going out” is only a preparatory stage. Thirdly, Leah’s “going out” and Dinah’s “going out” are not comparable.

In Old Testament times, it was not unheard of for a woman to go out alone. Rebekah went out alone to draw water (Genesis 24:15); and Rachel also looked after her father’s flock alone (Genesis 29:9). At most, we might feel

that the reason Dinah did not think things through enough is that the risks of going out alone increase significantly when one is in a foreign country. When the two angels came to Sodom, the people, old and young, came around the house and called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them" (Genesis 19:5-6), for the Sodomites saw these two angels as aliens. The concubines of the Levites were also bullied to death in Gibeah, where the Benjamites, who were far from their tribe, lived (Judges 19). When Ruth followed Naomi back to Bethlehem to settle down, she was also an outsider, and her mother-in-law knew the risks she faced. As it is recorded in the book of Ruth, "It is better my daughter, that you go out with his young women, otherwise you might be bothered in another field" (Ruth 2:22). It is not that it is immoral for Ruth to go into someone else's field, but that she will put herself in a dangerous situation. Dinah's situation is similar to that of Ruth. When she and her family settled in a foreign country, the risk of going out increased. Therefore, the Old Testament particularly praises receiving guests from afar. Because Lot received guests (Angels) from afar, when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, the angels saved his family. When Yahweh appeared to Abraham, Abraham thought they were guests from afar. Abraham's sincerity and humility were moving. He ran to meet them, and bowed down to the ground, called himself their servant, washed their feet with water, ordered Sarah to make bread, chose calves for the guests, and made a feast for them himself. And here God gave him a great promise, that Sarah his wife would have a son (Genesis 18:1-15).

This author agrees that in society then, Dinah, a beautiful young girl, may have been very naive to go out into a foreign environment, and may not have thought things through. She is responsible for going out alone in a foreign land. But she was only a teenage girl at the time, with no

social experience. This cannot be our reason to blame her. She is an innocent victim, and she deserves all our sympathy, not our blame.

The interpretation of Genesis 34 often proceeds from the perspective and interests of men. Dinah went out alone because she was too naive, not because she was bad. And the Scripture did not say that Dinah went against her father. It is obvious that the scripture did not blame Dinah for going out. On the other hand, did the storyteller blame Dinah? The traditional interpreter blames Dinah, but in fact, there is no sentence in this chapter in which Dinah is blamed. The criticism is all for Shechem. "When Shechem saw her, he took her and prostituted her and defiled her" (Genesis 34:3). Shechem defiled her as if she was a prostitute but the text does not say that Dinah behaved like a prostitute (Genesis 34:31). Did she know what would happen? Did she know she was going to be raped? Did she know what a rapist would do? Did she know what her brothers would do? Innocent Dinah should never be made responsible for the ensuing massacre. The traditional explanation ignores the fact that Dinah is a victim!

Decoding biblical texts: Attending to Dinah's Silence

The Bible is not only God's book, it is also a human book. "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible is inspired by God, so we must accept its transcendence and authority, and not regard it as a common book. The Holy Spirit wields her transcendent influence on biblical writers, such that their writing has a sacred nature, thus shaping guidance in faith and practice. But at the same time, the Bible cannot be separated from its ancient historical background, linguistic habits, geography and culture, writing

style and other factors. Over about 1600 years, the Bible was written by some 40 writers from different backgrounds. It was produced in specific human historical environments, reflecting the social situation and historical and cultural phenomena of its times. The Bible was formed through endless ages, over a history which was undeniably male centered and led. Thus, some biblical texts are patriarchal to a greater or lesser degree. According to Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, "The authors of the Bible are men who write male centered language, reflecting the experience of men. The choice and transmission of information also comes from male religious leaders. There is no doubt that the Bible is a male book."¹⁵ "This is not to say that the Bible deliberately excludes women. In short, the Bible reflects the culture and deep-rooted gender prejudice of the time."¹⁶ This is not just Schussler-Fiorenza's point of view, it is a consensus among women theologians.

As far as the narrative of chapter 34 in Genesis is concerned, yes, this is an instance of sexual assault on a woman, but it is a male centered story. If Dinah had not been defiled, then there would have been no story. Dinah is the key figure of the whole event, yet overall the passage is not Dinah's story, but her father's story, her brothers' story, and even the rapist's story.¹⁷ The Scripture itself has no description of the personal harm suffered by Dinah, the

15 Ulrike Bail, "The Breath after the Comma: Psalm 55 and Violence against Women," in *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 1 (1999): 7; Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 219.

16 Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1985), 50-51.

17 Sternberg, "Biblical Poetics and Sexual Politics: From Reading to Counter-Reading," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111(1992): 436-488.

physical, emotional and spiritual hurt she suffered. We can say that the biblical text itself is silent on these. Instead, the text focuses on the reactions of men who are not directly harmed. These men are standing in to speak for victims like Dinah. As a woman, she has no right to take part in a male-dominated negotiation and conversation, nor any ability to challenge the narrow male centered concept of sexual violence of her time. Her personal voice and feelings are drowned.¹⁸ So the question that remains for us is, how do we, as readers of Genesis 34, correct the imbalance of patriarchy in the Bible text? How to break Dinah's silence? That is, how to tell the story from the perspective of Dinah, a victim? Biblical scholars have different answers to such a question.

Meir Sternberg represents the negative attitude among biblical scholars. In his very important and influential work, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, he lays out an important principle of biblical narrative: it is very difficult to interpret the Bible correctly; it is either not fully interpreted, over-interpreted, or misread. ... ignorant, stubborn, preconceived and tendentious readings develop some wonderful ideas, but lack truth ... to understand the world you are reading, ...follow the narrator of the text uncritically, at least to an acceptable degree. This is the heart of biblical interpretation.¹⁹ He suspects any approach that is not done from the perspective of the narrator of the biblical text. Dinah is the protagonist of the story told in Genesis 34, but the Bible text is silent concerning her. The scripture does not describe her suffering after being raped, nor her thoughts or a way forward. Sternberg believes that it is necessary to simply accept the silence maintained by the scripture itself,

18 Ibid., 480.

19 Ibid., 481.

even though it is from the male perspective, which is the patriarchal concept and practice of sexual violence.²⁰

He believes that if the interpreter thinks this idea is uncomfortable, he must accept it, because it is the product of a specific social history. The consolation we and other readers have is that society has improved. However, if the reader still doesn't accept this, and still wants to break Dinah's silence and seek Dinah's voice, our only choice is to give up the interpretation of the Bible and fabricate another text ourselves. All in all, Sternberg's approach to exegesis is that when the Bible says something, we should understand, and where the Bible keeps silent, we should also keep silent. There is no doubt that this is faithful to the biblical text, and it is the safest course in interpretation of scriptures. Genesis 34 clearly distinguishes between the thoughts of Jacob, his sons, Shechem, Hamor, and the men of Shechem. Steinberg shows us how the storyteller skillfully integrates the voices of different characters and guides the reader's understanding in a certain direction. That is to say, the narrator of the story also has his own perspective and voice and wants the readers to share this view.

Should we equate the voice of the narrator with that of God? Sternberg believes that the voice of the narrator is actually similar to the voice of the prophet, which can be equated with the voice of God. However, this is questionable, because even if Sternberg is right, the idea of God cannot be fully revealed by the narrator of the story, even if the narrator can partially reflect the idea of God. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament view events from multiple perspectives. There is no single discourse that can embrace the issues of morality and theology; many different perspectives are integrated with each other. God speaks to God's people through the Bible. But we cannot

20 *Ibid.*, 117.

say that the narrator of the Bible has said all that is valuable or embraced the whole of the will of God. God speaks to God's people through the whole Bible, not just a particular passage. Every part of the Bible was inspired by God in its original environment and transmits God's will. However, when passages interact, they are readjusted. Therefore, the authority any passage of scripture has for the Church is shaped when we read it in its context.

With the development of the times and the diversification of ways of interpreting the Bible, an increasing number of biblical scholars has put forward different readings. Exegesis today can be broadly divided into two approaches. One approach is from the inside out. What are the common historical, cultural background, original text, and even archaeological, linguistic and artistic analyses that we use today to explore the Bible text itself? What does the author mean? This is the approach to biblical interpretation that Steinberg insisted on.

Another way is to read the scriptures from the outside in, based on your own life experience. Because of differences in identity, gender, nationality, country and class, everyone's emotional reaction and the light gained from reading the Bible is different. Your own experience will affect your reading and understanding of the scriptures. "Feminist exegesis" and the "reader response method" and other modern exegetical approaches work in the same way. It is always our first task to seek the biblical authors' meaning, but we do not stop there. To some extent, the biblical writer's view is God's will, but it does not embody the whole will of God. The author of the Bible is not equal to God. The author of the Bible wants to express a certain view through this passage, but God wants to reveal much more meaning through this passage. So different people receive different revelation and light when they read the same passage.

The storyteller in Chapter 34 of Genesis may be writing directly or indirectly from the perspective of a certain group, or from the perspective of the residents of Shechem; or from Jacob and his sons, Shechem, or other perspectives. Each perspective is a different story, each story has a different purpose. This leads to differences in material selection and story organization. Because of different concerns, the narrator of any story deliberately weakens some characters or strengthens others. The weakening of Dinah's role does not necessarily mean that the rape incident is not serious. She is the main victim of the rape incident, but [weakening her role] shows that the narrator's focus is not here. The story doesn't feel from Dinah's perspective. Not because Dinah's perspective is not important, nor because her perspective doesn't matter to the author, but because Dinah's perspective has nothing to do with the central idea that the storyteller wants to express. We cannot assume that because Dinah's voice is missing, the rape victim's voice is unimportant.

When we read the relevant scriptures cross-textually or inter-textually, we will gain a more correct understanding. Most similar to Dinah's situation is that of Tamar, David's daughter, who was defiled by Amnon. Both were unmarried girls. In Samuel 13:13, we see the pain and helplessness of a raped woman, shown in the description of the pain caused by the violence to Tamar. "As for me, where could I carry my shame?" (2 Samuel 13:13). "...for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other you did to me" (Samuel 13:16). "But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing, she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went" (2 Samuel: 19).

In ancient Israel, the best way out for the aggrieved women was to marry the aggressor. Virgins who lost their virginity could hardly get married normally, so their best way out was to marry their rapist. Consequently,

Deuteronomy also has a special law to protect young girls who have been violated. "If a man meets a virgin who has not been betrothed, catches her and commits adultery with her, and is seen, the man shall give fifty shekels of silver to the father of the woman; because he has defiled the woman, he shall marry her and shall not divorce her for life" (Deuteronomy 22:28-29). Fifty shekels of silver was a very large amount at that time. Although we cannot exactly calculate the equivalent in today's money, some scholars think that the annual wage of male Israelites then was about thirty shekels. But it was not a small amount; David bought the threshing floor and the oxen of Araunah for fifty shekels of silver, built an altar there and made offerings to avert the plague (2 Samuel 24:24). The law also protected the violated woman in that the man cannot divorce her. The implication is that he must support her for life. In the Old Testament, men were superior to women, and women had little ability to maintain their health. Casting off a wife was common. Once a woman is divorced, she will lose her support.

After Dinah was raped, the Bible text is silent about this, but from the relevant scripture readers feel that rape is a terrible thing. We cannot help but think about it. God sympathizes and has compassion for the raped woman, whose situation was extremely miserable. Her best outcome would have been to marry the man who raped her. When Shechem raped Dinah, Dinah was in pain and afraid, so Shechem said sweet words to comfort her (Genesis 34:3) and promised to take care of her. For Dinah, marriage was the best way out, so she chose marriage. The passage depicts a compromise and a realistic solution.

In contrast to the rapist who is trying to compensate, her aggressive older brothers are concerned only with their own honor, not with Dinah's happiness. They did not notice Shechem trying to make up for his sins. They did not consider that revenge would destroy Dinah's life, nor

did they care what was best for Dinah. They get her out of Shechem's house against her will and kill her reformed fiancé. This is why we restore Dinah's situation, speak for Dinah, and no longer consign her to silence forever.

Sternberg claims that we only need to interpret the Bible according to the will and guidance of the narrator, that we should keep silent if the biblical writer keeps silent. However, with regard to such violent events, Bible interpreters and readers can get comfort from our present reality, because since the biblical era, people's understanding of sexual violence has greatly improved. But feminist exegetes think that we should not remain complacent, in fact, we need to make more progress. If we don't reinterpret the text of the Bible, we cannot promote greater progress. There is a lot of evidence that to this day, many women's experiences of rape are still being stifled and their suffering continues to be denied. From the past to the present, there are many sisters like Dinah, who have no chance to tell their pain, sorrow and anger. Their sufferings from sexual violence were either reinterpreted or suppressed by the patriarchal supremacy that occupied the dominant position in society. In reading the stories of women being ignored, silenced, oppressed and sacrificed in the biblical text, then, we are interpreting the text as it exists, but the absences and silences in the scriptures are also worth reading. In this way, we not only seek comfort from the progress of human society, but also become a part of promoting that progress.

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