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obedience of faith*

GENERAL EDITOR: SUNAND SUMITHRA



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As a call to the church to develop a relevant Christology, the Statement of the Papal Commission makes a fitting conclusion to a survey of the past decade. No-one can dispute that much has been said and written during that time, but it remains very much an open question how much of what has appeared will eventually form part of that great tradition which is the witness of God's faithful saints in every age to the reality of his presence with us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Gerald L. Bray lectures at Oak Hill College in London, U.K. p. 64

Church and State in Socialist China, 1949–1987—I

Jonathan Chao

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We are glad to publish Chao's Church and State in Socialist China in two parts. It is an excellent research analysing not only the historical but also the theological issues in mainland China during the past 40 years. The second part will be published in the next issue of ERT.

Editor

INTRODUCTION

Church and state may seem to be a settled question in Western, Christianized countries. But in socialist countries like China and in other third world countries where revolutions are still going on, church and state is usually the most important issue affecting the life and witness of the church.

In Hong Kong today, as the British colony makes its transition to Chinese sovereignty, church and state has become a matter of primary concern for the Christian church, both Catholic and Protestant. Recently a ghost writer by the name of Hsin Weisu (a Chinese pun for Hsin Hua-she, or New China News Agency) has written two articles suggesting that the principle of separation of church and state should be incorporated into the Basic Law, the constitution for Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Zone of the People's Republic of China after 1997.¹ Hsin's definition of the separation of church and state is essentially separation of religion from politics, and so he suggested that neither the church nor the clergy should become involved in politics and that the Basic Law should only guarantee 'normal religious activities'. Religion, he argued, belongs to the realm of the mind (thinking, the noumenal world), and politics deals with political power. Since

¹ 'Tsung-chiao Tzu-you yu Chi-pan-fa' [Religious Freedom and the Basic Law], *Ming-pao*, Dec. 5, 1986; Fee. 3, 4, 1987.

their purposes and sphere are different, religious clergy should confine themselves to matters of religion and should not comment on, or participate in, politics.

Hsin's articles elicited many Christian responses which appeared in Hong Kong Chinese-language newspapers. This debate on separation of religion from politics has yielded over twenty articles and is still going on. Many who disagreed with Hsin could not understand his logic, and thought his demands rather absurd. However, if one reads [p. 65](#) Hsin's articles from the perspective of the Chinese Communist attitude towards religion, one can see almost at once that his position is none other than a reflection of standard Chinese Communist religious policy.²

The people in Hong Kong are already feeling the pressure from China as their future is being shaped by the Basic Law Drafting Committee. The churches and their leaders are beginning to sense the coming of a new reality: that Hong Kong will soon come under Chinese Communist rule and that a new relationship between the churches and the new Hong Kong government will eventually emerge. What is it going to be like? How much of the current religious freedom will be extended beyond 1997, and for how long? These are questions of existential interest to the Christian community in Hong Kong. The issue of church and state has arrived at our door steps!

The churches in Hong Kong, therefore, are looking to the experiences of the church in China for some insights into how to prepare themselves for life and ministry beyond 1997, especially in the matter of church and state relations.

Churches in other parts of the world are becoming increasingly interested in China, in the story of the church in China, and in the future prospects for missions in China. To understand all these correctly, one must first return to the basic issues of church and state in China as a socialist country.

To understand the nature of church and state relations in China, we must first understand Chinese Communist religious policy. Secondly, we must understand the main ideological sources contributing to the development of that policy. Thirdly, we have to trace the historical development of the church and state relationship since 1949. We shall confine ourselves to the Protestant experience.

THE NATURE OF CHINESE COMMUNIST RELIGIOUS POLICY

In socialist China the party's religious policy forms the framework within which church and state relations take place. The stated policy is that 'citizens in the People's Republic of China (PRC) shall enjoy freedom of religious belief,' as stated in article 36 of the 1982 Constitution.³ This policy is more fully expounded in Document No. [P. 66](#) 19 of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Part (CCP) issued on March 31, 1982. However, 'freedom of religious belief' is defined in terms of freedom of inward faith: the right to

² See my response on this perspective in *Chiu-shih nientai* [The Nineties] (March 1987), pp. 46–48.

³ The full text of Article 36 reads: 'Citizens of the People's Republic of China shall have freedom of religious beliefs. No government organizations, or social groups, or individuals may force [other] citizens to believe in religion or not to believe in religion, nor can they discriminate against those citizens who believe in religion or who do not believe in religion. The state shall protect normal religious activities. No one may use religion to conduct activities that would disturb social order, harm to people's physical health, or frustrate the country's educational system. Religious organizations and religious affairs shall not be directed by foreign powers'.

believe or not to believe in one's heart.⁴ It does not include freedom of propagation or freedom to conduct church life as prescribed in the Scriptures, or as religious bodies wish to conduct it. Nor does freedom of religious belief include the social expressions of one's faith: religion must not interfere with politics, education, marriage and family life, etc. Religion is to be kept as a private matter and is not allowed to exert any influence on the society.⁵ Religious activities may be conducted so long as they are done under the control of the state and are carried out under the supervision of the patriotic religious organizations. These are called 'normal religious activities,' which are to be conducted in designated places, by designated religious personnel (clergy approved by the patriotic organizations such as the TSPM), and even approved clergy must work only in designated areas.⁶ This is called the 'three-designates' policy.⁷

All religious activities conducted by believers themselves outside the control of the state and its patriotic religious organizations are considered 'abnormal religious activities', and hence are regarded as illegal and anti-revolutionary. Such activities, like independent home meetings and itinerant preaching, are not considered as religious activities, but as political violations of state policy, and violators are dealt with as political criminals.⁸ p. 67

With this kind of definition of normal and abnormal religious activities, there is no room given for the believers' direct relationship With believers or churches in foreign countries. Foreign religious bodies are forbidden to develop a direct working relationship with churches in China.⁹ The independence of the Chinese church is stressed by the state and its patriotic organizations in the name of the former Protestant missionary goals of 'three selves': self-support, self-government, and self-propagation.¹⁰

However, the united front theory dictates that religion may be used as an avenue for winning international goodwill in order that China's national programme might be enhanced. For this purpose, patriotic organizations, such as the Three-self Patriotic

⁴ For the full text in Chinese see *San-chung-ch'uan-hui yi-lai-tsung-yao Wenhsien hsuan-p'ien* [Selected Important Documents Since the Third Plenum] (Tientsin: Jen-nin Jih-pao Ch'u-pan-she, 1982), pp. 1218–1240.

⁵ Ibid., p. 1226.

⁶ Ibid., p. 1230.

⁷ This term is used in the various local Three-self Patriotic Covenants. See, for example, 'Kuan-yu wei-hu cheng-ch'ang tsung-chiao huo-tung ti chueh-ting' [Concerning Resolutions on Maintaining Normal Religious Activities], published by the Yunnan Three-self Patriotic Movement Committee and the Yunnan Christian Council, March 29, 1982.

⁸ Section 10 of Document 19 reads: 'While we resolutely protect all normal religious activities, we must resolutely attack illegal criminal activities and antirevolutionary destructive activities under the cloak of religion, as well as various superstitious activities which do not fall under the realm of religion, but which are harmful to national interest and to the lives and properties of the people'. Ibid., p. 1235. Section 11 reads: 'We must intensify our awareness, paying close attention to hostile foreign religious forces attempting to establish underground churches and other illegal organizations. Institutions where espionage activities are carried out under the cloak of religion, they must be resolutely attacked.' Ibid., p. 1237.

⁹ Part of Section 11 of Document 19 reads: 'International reactionary forces, especially imperialist religious forces, including the Vatican and Protestant missions will attempt to use all kinds of opportunities to conduct infiltration activities, seeking to return to Mainland China. Our policy is to positively expand religious international friendly relations and, at the same time, resolutely resist the infiltration of all hostile foreign religious forces.' Ibid., p. 1236.

¹⁰ See recent publications by the TSPM in its official organ: *Tien Feng*.

Movement and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, are encouraged to receive foreign religious groups as well as to send delegations to other countries.¹¹ Domestically, united front thinking also directs government officials and patriotic church leaders to win the support of the religious masses to contribute towards the national programme of modernization.

These religious policies are formulated by the United Front Work Department of the Party's Central Committee in consultation with the Institute of World Religion in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) of the State, and the national leaders of the patriotic religious organizations.¹²

Religious policies are implemented by the Religious Affairs Bureau, which has a national bureau that directs provincial and major p. 68 municipal bureaux, which in turn direct the numerous county level bureaux.¹³ Under the directives of the RAB, policies are carried out by the major patriotic religious organizations, namely, (1) the Chinese Buddhist Association, (2) the Chinese Taoist Association, (3) the Chinese Islamic Association, (4) the Chinese Protestant Three-self Patriotic Movement (1954), which established the China Christian Council (1980), and (5) the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (1957), which also formed the College of Chinese Catholic Bishops and the Committee on Chinese Catholic Church Affairs.¹⁴

These patriotic associations report to the RAB, which is usually a part of the local united front office in the party branch bureau, which works closely with the Public Security Bureau (PSB). Religious policies are enforced by the Public Security Bureau (PSB). Without this enforcement, the policies and the patriotic organizations are powerless. Suspected violators of the policy are warned and interrogated by officials in the RAB. Sometimes they are arrested by the PSB and kept at its 'Retention Centres'. Often officials in the Three-self Patriotic Movement serve as the informants.¹⁵ Suspected violators so arrested are further interrogated by the PSB, and then the case is investigated by the Bureau of Investigation which then turns the case to the court. The district court would then either sentence the accused to some many years of imprisonment or release

¹¹ The TSPM has sent delegations to Hong Kong (March 1981), Canada and the US (October 1981), Scandinavian countries (1982), Australian and New Zealand (March, 1984); Japan (Sept., 1984), W. Germany, Hungary and Switzerland (Nov. 1983), and India (Feb. 1985).

¹² This process can be observed in the consolidation of the religious policy between December 1981, when consultation with TSPM leaders began, to December 1982, when the constitution was promulgated.

¹³ For a description of the inner workings of the RAB, see Chapter I in George Patterson's book, *Christianity in Communist China* (Waco, 1970) and Holmes Welch's *Buddhism Under Mao* (Cambridge, 1971), chapter I. The source for both appears to be the same person.

¹⁴ For the Chinese original, see Section 7 of Document No. 19. Ibid., p. 1231: 'The task of these patriotic organizations is to assist the party and the government in carrying out the policy of freedom of religious belief, to help the broad mass of believers and religious personages to continuously raise their patriotic and socialist consciousness, to represent the legal rights and interests of the religious, to organize normal religious activities and deal with religious affairs. All patriotic religious organizations should accept the leadership of the Party and the government, and Party and government cadres should become adept at supporting and assisting religious organizations in solving their own problems, and should not try to take over themselves.'

¹⁵ These inter-working relations between the TSPM, the RAB, and the PSB are commonly known by Christians in China who have gone through the experiences of interrogation and arrest, but seldom known outside China.

him.¹⁶ This process from arrest to p. 69 sentencing could take anywhere from half a year to two years or even longer. The sentenced are then transferred from the PSB's retention centre to various prisons.

There is an interlocking relationship between the United Front Work Department, the Religious Affairs Bureau, patriotic religious organizations, such as the Three-self Patriotic Movement, and the Public Security Bureau at the national, provincial, and county levels.

How, then, did these religious policies and practices develop? We must now turn the historical factors contributing to their formation.

HISTORICAL SOURCES OF CHINESE COMMUNIST RELIGIOUS POLICY AND PRACTICE

There are four major sources contributing to the formation of Chinese Communist religious policy. These interacted with each other, producing a blend of traditional and modern Chinese totalitarian policy of state control of religion, which is the essential nature of church and state relations in socialist China.

First, there is the tradition of state control of religions in traditional China. In imperial China, the state assumed a right of sovereignty over all aspects of the lives of its subjects. There was no separation of church and state as understood in the West, neither in theory nor in practice, and the Chinese people have never established their right to question such overall sovereignty of the state. Since the late Han period and definitely after the mid-T'ang, Confucianism enjoyed a status of 'official orthodoxy,' not only as a system of political philosophy, but also as a way of life.¹⁷ With this affirmation of Confucian orthodoxy, all other systems of beliefs were considered 'heterodox.' However, major institutional religions were tolerated so long as they were brought under the control of the state. On the one hand, through law codes and government control, the state reduced the influence of religious groups to a level of socio-political insignificance. On the other hand, the state developed a system of control whereby religious expansion was contained, and their activities strictly p. 70 controlled by the government, which used religious leaders who worked for the Board of Rites.¹⁸ All other sectarian groups were not only considered heterodox, but also as potential rebels, and hence were outlawed and often suppressed by force. Catholic Christianity suffered nearly 150 years of suppression as a

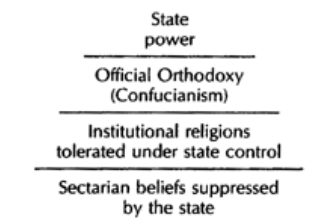
¹⁶ In a recent case a woman evangelist was arrested by the PSB in December 14, 1984 and charged with conducting anti-revolutionary activities. Her criminal activities were described as having joined an illegal Christian organization (house church), participated in an evangelistic team to Szechuan, engaged in itinerant preaching, and developed churches, etc. activities which 'deceived the masses and seriously disturbed social order'. On December 14, 1985, the Bureau of Investigation moved her case to the district court. In the Letter of Prosecution, the investigator stated that the accused 'by conducting illegal missionary activities and having seriously influenced social order, and production order, has violated Article 158 of the Criminal Code of the PRC and so is guilty of the crime of disturbing social order.' On January 28, 1986, the District Court released her on the ground of sections 1 and 2 of Article 158 of the Criminal Code. These facts are taken from the certificate of court decisions given to the accused.

¹⁷ For studies on Confucian official orthodoxy, see Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity* (Cambridge, 1961). See also Arthur Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (Stanford, 1959), especially his section on the Sui dynasty.

¹⁸ For a description of the history of this control, see C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley, 1961), p. 13.

foreign heterodox sect before it was tolerated in 1844.¹⁹ Protestant and Catholic Christianity enjoyed their freedom of propagation primarily on account of the toleration clause included in the Treaty of Tientsin (1858).

This tradition of state control, official orthodoxy, state toleration, and the suppression of heterodox sects, may be described by the following diagram:



The second source is the anti-religious thinking which arose from the New Culture Movement during 1920–1921. As a result of the debate on religion, Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth era came to take a position that all realities must be tested by science and, in the process, rejected all religions as of no value for the building up of a modern China. Religious beliefs were considered a hindrance to the development of a young, modern China.²⁰ This anti-religious sentiment influenced many of the intellectuals and students from whom the Chinese Communist Party drew its first recruits.

Some intellectuals tried to make room for religion by relegating it to p. 71 the realm of subjectivity, acknowledging that science is the test for objective realities. This is why even today Chinese Communist theoreticians still relegate religion to the private sphere, denying it of any objective social value.²¹

The revolutionary view of religion that prevailed in the 19th century West greatly influenced Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth Era. Religion was seen as a historical phenomenon in the evolution of human society: that religion has its own process of rise, development, and disappearance; that religion arose because primitive man could not understand the natural forces around him, and so developed a religious consciousness; that religion began to develop when man entered into a class society but could not free himself from its system of exploitation; and that religion will disappear when man enters into a socialist society when the social bases for its existence have been removed.²²

The third source is Lenin's theory of the imperialist nature of religion. Lenin believed that religion is an opium which the imperialists give to the people to dull their senses of resistance to exploitation. Therefore, to fight against imperialism, one must oppose religion. Lenin's view was imported into, and propagated widely throughout China by the Socialist Youth Corps under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party during 1922

¹⁹ See Searle M. Bates' unpublished paper on 'Church and State in Traditional China,' seminar on Modern China, Columbia University, November 1967, p. 13.

²⁰ For a fuller analysis of this debate on religion and the anti-religious sentiment in the May Fourth era, see chapter III of my thesis, 'The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement: Protestant Response to Anti-Christian Movements in Modern China, 1919–1927,' Ph.D. thesis in Oriental Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1986. (See also Shao Yu-ming's article in the Notre Dame Conference book, 1978).

²¹ See the various responses of religious leaders to the article on religion in the Constitution, 'Kuo-chia pao-hu cheng-ch'ang ti tsung-chiao huo-tung,' *Jen-min Jih-pao*, July 3, 1982.

²² See Hsiao Hsien-fa [former director of RAB], Cheng-ch'ueh li-chieh ho kuan-ch'e tangti tsung-chiao hsin-yang chih-yu cheng-tzu yue' [Correctly Understanding and Implementing the Party's Policy of Freedom of Religious Belief], *Jen-min Jih-pao*, June 14, 1980. This interpretation was repeated in a similar article in *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, February 18, 1985, the latest document on religious policy, which simply repeated what Hsiao said in 1980 and published in Document No. 19 of 1982.

and 1923. Later, during the years of Chinese Communist collaboration with the Kuomintang (1924–1927), Lenin's anti-religious views were popularized by the anti-Christian movements which were carried out by the CCP and the KMT as part of their anti-imperialist campaign. Since then Christianity has been regarded by the Chinese Communists as the vanguard of foreign imperialism, and missionaries and Chinese pastors have been seen as the agents of cultural aggression. This view was so widely propagated, and for so long, that even today many Chinese people are still influenced by it.

The fourth source is Mao Tse-tung's theory of contradictions and the united front policy. Mao asserted that there are antagonistic contradictions, p. 72 such as political and ideological contradictions, and non-antagonistic contradictions, such as religious differences among the people. Mao also differentiated primary contradictions from secondary contradictions, and he stressed the mobility of these contradictions according to changing historical situations. In this regard, religion was considered a non-antagonistic and secondary contradiction.

When applied to the united front policy, the task of the party is to unite with, or befriend, secondary contradictions in order to oppose the primary contradictions. For example, since 1969 China has been befriending the U.S. in order to oppose the Russian threat, which has become China's primary contradiction. Similarly, the religious masses must be won over to fight against backwardness in the pursuit of modernization. While uniting or befriending secondary contradictions, religious people must also be educated so that they will gradually abandon their subjective worldview, and take on an 'objective' materialistic worldview, abandon their religious superstitions, and so be 'won' to the party's side. These are the positive dimensions of the united front policy.

But the united policy also has its negative dimension, namely, those who refuse to accept the party's soft, educational persuasion and insist on holding to their own views must be dealt with in a more aggressive manner, through criticisms, threats and, if necessary, force, so that in the end the recalcitrant person will be isolated and his influence minimized. But who is to determine what is a primary contradiction (so as to adopt a policy of attack) from a secondary contradiction (so as to apply a policy of friendly persuasion)? Historically, this has been determined by whoever holds power in the Party and in relation to what kind of national programme he desires to implement. The historical context, therefore, determines how the united front policy is to be implemented whether in the realm of religion or in other areas.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS AS SEEN FROM THE PROTESTANT EXPERIENCE, 1949–1987

How has the Chinese Communist Party been dealing with the Protestant church which it has all along regarded as an instrument of cultural imperialism? What procedures did the Party take to bring the pluralistic Protestant church in China under its control? How did the church leaders respond to government pressures? What kind of changing relationships have emerged during the long historical process since 1949? We shall now examine these questions in a historical manner. P. 73

During the initial stage (1949–50), the state sought to establish a patriotic agency to give direction to the Protestant church: the rise of the Three-self Movement

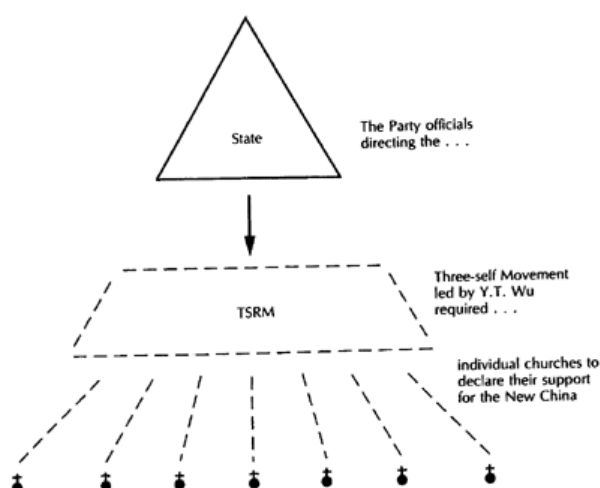
During the initial months after the Communist take over of China (October 1949 to July 1950), the new government was too busily involved with the establishment of economic and political order to bother with religious affairs, and churches were left alone to 'do

their own thing' without much interference. Church activities, such as revival meetings, were carried on as usual. Many missionaries stayed with their Chinese colleagues. However, a small nucleus of progovernment church leaders was already in the making when these churchmen were invited to attend the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference held in Peking from September 23–30, 1949. At that Conference the new government was born, and on October 1st, Mao Tse-tung declared the formal beginning of the People's Republic of China. After the Conference the Protestant participants, headed by Y.T. Wu (the former Y.M.C.A. Publications Secretary), formed a 'Christian Visitation Team,' to visit the Protestant leaders in a few major cities, and to explain to them the new government's 'Common Programme' and its policy of freedom of religious belief.

During May 2, 6–21, 1950, when this group of leaders was visiting the churches in Peking, Premier Chou En-lai summoned its members to discuss the future course of Christianity in China. The end result of three nocturnal visits was the publication of a document called 'The Path of Endeavour for the Chinese Protestant Church during the Course of China's Construction', known in the West as the 'Christian Manifesto.' Published on July 28, 1950, this document was immediately circulated among church leaders throughout China for signature. The document basically called for Christians to oppose imperialism and to accept the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. It also called upon Protestant churches to become self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, and hence it became the founding charter of the 'Three-self Movement'. The signature movement differentiated the 'patriotic' church leaders who signed it from those who refused to sign it.

Prior to Chou En-lai's summons, the National Christian Council (NCC) of China (formed in 1922) had already made plans on January 26, 1950, to hold a National Christian Conference during August 19-27th to discuss the appropriate Christian response to the new situation, but this plan was aborted soon after the May meeting between Chou and Y. T. Wu and his associates. The new body, which p. 74 took on the name 'Three-self Reform Movement', soon replaced the NCC as the national coordinating body representing Protestant Christianity in China.

The church and state relationship at this initial stage may be represented by the following chart:



During this stage individual churches still retained their autonomy. They could continue to conduct their regular religious activities. The state did not exercise its control directly over the churches, nor did it use existing Protestant channels, such as the NCC, to influence them, but created a new informal body made up of pro-government clergy and assisted by party secretaries. Through it the state made its position known to the

churches, and required their loyalty. This informal body, known as the 'Three-self Reform Movement', was not an ecclesiastical [p. 75](#) organization, but a 'political movement' which published a 'Manifesto' signed by 40 prominent church leaders.

This movement, headed by Y. T. Wu, began to give political direction to the Chinese Protestant Church on behalf of the new government, and church leaders had to reckon it as such accordingly.

During the 1951–1954 period, the state controlled the churches through the formation of the Chinese Protestant Anti-America and Aid Korea Three-self Reform Movement

After the Korean War broke out, especially after the Chinese People's Liberation Army crossed the Yalu River, America came to be regarded as an antagonistic contradiction in relation to China. On December 29 1950, the US froze Chinese assets in America, and China American assets in China. This change in Sino-American relations seriously affected the Chinese Communist government's attitude towards the Christian church, both Protestant and Catholic. All churches which had received, or were receiving, financial subsidy from America immediately came under suspicion, and were required to register themselves with the appropriate local authorities, to whom they had to make regular financial reports.

During April 16–20, 1951, the Religious Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Education and Culture summoned 151 Chinese Protestant leaders from churches which were receiving foreign subsidy. In this Peking conference, these church leaders were told to sever their relations with American imperialism. They were also taught how to conduct accusation meetings against 'reactionaries', missionaries and Chinese pastors who at one time or another had collaborated with Chiang Kai-shek or who had failed to pledge their support for the New China. Furthermore, at this meeting the 'Preparatory Committee of the Chinese Protestant Anti-America and Aid Korea Three-self Reform Movement Committee' was formally organized.

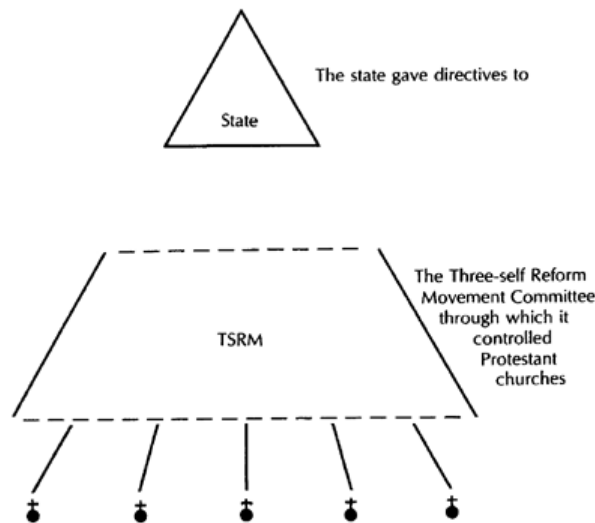
After the Peking Conference, the 151 delegates were told to carry out anti-imperialism accusation meetings in their own churches. Those who had successfully conducted such meetings were urged to join the Three-self Reform Movement. Simultaneously the TSRM also began to organize provincial and local committees. Such committees were made up of those church leaders who had declared their allegiance to the government. Meanwhile, the movement for signing the 'Christian Manifesto' continued. By 1953 nearly 400,000 out of a total of 840,000 Chinese Protestants signed this document. [p. 76](#)

During this stage church and state relations may be described as follows:

Some of the ways by which the State exercised control over Protestant churches included the following: (1) Churches were required to hang the Five Star flag and/or Mao's picture; failure to do so could be used as evidence of reactionary attitudes, and such churches were tried. (2) Churches were required to sign the 'Manifesto', and to conduct anti-imperialist accusation meetings. (3) Christian educational and medical institutions founded by foreign missions were taken over by the state, and church boards disbanded by 1952. (4) Theological schools in the north were amalgamated into the Yen-ching School of Theology and those in the south into Nanking Theological Seminary. (5) Christian publishers were told to comply with the policies of the new China and most of them were closed down before 1954.

By 1953 all Protestant churches founded by foreign missions were brought under the control of the state through the agency of the TSRM. [p. 77](#) over by the state, and church boards disbanded by 1952. (4) Theological schools in the north were amalgamated into the Yen-ching School of Theology and those in the south into Nanking Theological

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Dr. Jonathan Chao is Director of of CCRC, Hong Kong. [p. 78](#)

The Secularization Myth

Harvie M. Conn

Reprinted from Urban Mission volume 3, Number 5, May 1986 with permission

In this article Harvie M. Conn explores the popular wisdom that faith and religion die in the city. As an expert in Urban Missions Conn brings out the difference between secularism and secularization, and rightly concludes that secularism is present in the city to no less extent than in the suburbs. That being the case, Conn calls upon Christians and churches to target the cities and not to flee from them, to analyse the felt needs behind the secularization process and to develop a holistic ministry for the city. With David Barrett's projection of 40% of world population living in the city by the year 2000, Conn's analyses become more imperative than ever.

Editor

Harvey Cox said in the 1960's 'The rise of urban civilization and the collapse of traditional religion are the two main hallmarks of our era and are closely related movements'.¹ Our urban world, he continued, is not persecuting religion. It simply bypasses and undercuts

¹ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 1.