

The Barrett survey shows that of the ten largest cities in the world in 1985, four were in Asia: Tokyo/Yokohama (21,800,000), Shanghai (17,500,000), Beijing (14,000,000), and Seoul (10,200,000). By 2025 A.D. seven out of the ten largest cities will be in Asia: Shanghai (36,100,000), Beijing (31,900,000), Bombay (27 million), Calcutta (26,400,000), Jakarta (23,600,000), Dakha (23,500,000), Tokyo/Yokohama (20,700,000), and Madras (20,600,000).⁴²

In 1985 there were some 2,400 cities in the world with a population of over 100,000 people and 276 megacities with more than a million. By 2,000 more than half of the world's population will reside in cities.⁴³ p. 173

What do all these 'mega-numbers' mean to the church in Asia, and particularly its theological institutions?

1. We must develop urban ministry courses in the theological curriculum and offer degrees in this field. Qualified lecturers and research materials must be provided.

2. We must find more urban-oriented practical work for theological students and closely supervise them. Continuing education on urban ministry for pastors is also needed.

3. We must find more non-traditional forms of theological education to train the laity of the urban church, different forms of extension education (TEE). As Jesus wept over the spiritual and physical conditions of the people in Jerusalem in the first century, Christians today must have the same compassion and burden for the peoples of the cities in order to win them to Jesus Christ.

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

Jonathan Chao

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This is the second and concluding part of Chao's analysis of the political situation in China over the last half century, and the Christian implications of it. The first half was published in our last issue.

Editor

⁴² Barrett, pp. 45–46. Bakke's statistics describe that 17 out of 25 largest cities in the world by 2000 will be in Asia.

⁴³ Raymond Bakke, 'Sociology and Demographics of World Class Cities', unpublished paper at the Trinary Consultation on Evangelizing World Cities in Chicago (March 14–17, 1986), pp. 4–5.

DURING 1954–1958 THE STATE REFORMED THE CHURCH THROUGH POLITICAL STUDIES

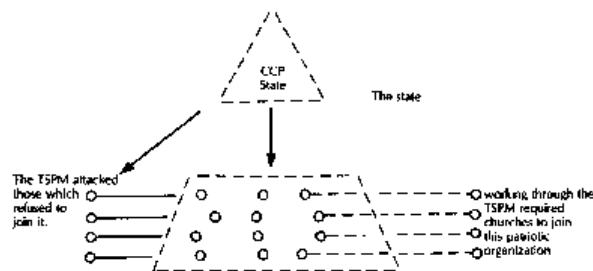
In July 1954 China promulgated its first constitution, and churches were called upon to support it. The Korean war was over by 1953, and a new name was needed for the anti-America Aid-Korean Three-self Reform Movement. The TSRM, therefore, held the First 'National Christian Conference' in July 1954 in Peking. At that conference, the name of the TSRM was changed to 'Three-self Patriotic Movement (TSPM),' and a constitution of the TSPM was adopted.

After the first National Christian Conference, further efforts were made to organize local committees of the TSPM, and all churches were required to join the TSPM, the symbol of anti-imperialist patriotism. Whereas earlier the TSRM led or directed the churches as an *ad hoc* patriotic movement, now the TSPM had become an organization defining the sphere of patriotic religious existence.

Churches which refused to join the TSPM *ipso facto* declared themselves 'non-patriotic.' Furthermore, whereas earlier mainline churches founded by foreign missions were the main targets of attack, after 1954 the indigenous Chinese churches came under pressure. In 1955 those church leaders who resisted the TSPM, such as Wang Ming-tao in Peking and Lam Hin-ko in Canton, were arrested. Similarly, Chinese Catholic clergy who refused to cooperate also came under scrutiny. Bishop Kung Pinmei was also arrested in 1955.

The relationship of church and state during this period may be described as in the facing diagram.

However, even at this stage, individual churches remained intact in that each church could still make its own ecclesiastical decisions, including whether to join the TSPM or not. Within the framework of the TSPM, the state conducted political educational classes for the p. 175 pastors, hoping that they would come to the viewpoint of the party on the place of Christianity in socialist China.



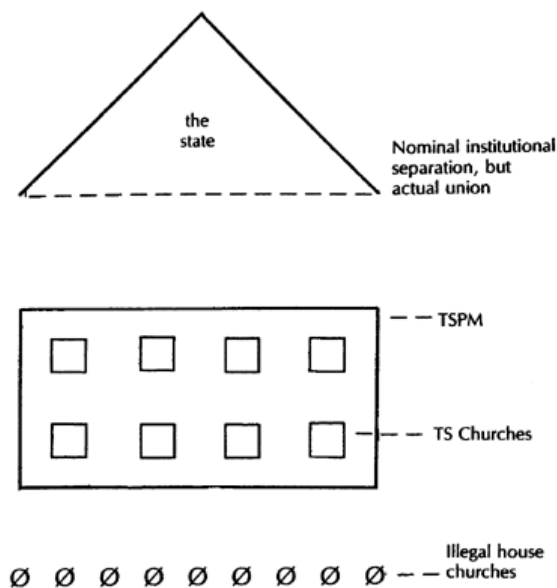
DURING 1956–1966 A UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE TOOK PLACE IN THE FORMULATION OF THREE-SELF (STATE) CHURCHES

Starting in the summer of 1957 the CCP began to conduct a 'Socialist Education Movement' and, after the launching of the Great Leap Forward Movement (1958), this movement was even more intensified. In the fall of 1958 in Shanghai, pastors who had already joined the TSPM were told to attend political study sessions away from home. These sessions lasted for six months. A second session was conducted during the first half of 1959. During the course of study, the question of the class nature of preachers came up. Are preachers exploiters or exploited? Those who realized that they were exploiters 'volunteered' to join the proletarian class by becoming factory workers. Those who couldn't come to such enlightenment were sent to fields of manual labour anyway for continuous reform.

The prolonged absence of these pastors from their churches and their subsequent departure from the ministry left most congregations half empty and without pastors. The TSPM then called for a 'church union' movement. Some of the congregations 'offered' their church buildings to the state; others united themselves with neighbouring congregations. The result was a remarkable reduction of churches. For example, the 200 plus churches in Shanghai were reduced to eight, and the 66 churches in Peking to four.

The resultant few churches that remained after the amalgamation movement were pastored by men appointed by the TSPM, and since they have been called 'three-self churches.' A team of pastors from [p. 176](#) several denominations who did well in their political studies or whose respected names were still useful to the TSPM worked in these Three-self churches.

This relationship between the church and the state during this period may be described as union of church and state:



Individual congregations in the TSPM no longer had any autonomy; the people in a congregation could no longer make decisions on the election of church officers or the appointment of pastors. After 1958, country churches were closed down by the government, and independent church meetings were considered illegal, and their leaders were subject to arrest. House churches had to meet in secret. [p. 177](#)

DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION YEARS (1966-76) THE STATE SOUGHT TO DESTROY THE CHURCH

When the Cultural Revolution broke out in August 1966, the Red Guards stormed party headquarters, closed down the United Front and the Religious Affairs offices, and stopped all existing Three-self churches. In their attempt to destroy the 'four olds', they sought to do away with all organized religions along with Chinese folk religions which they considered as superstitions. Their attacks represented a drastic shift from the soft-line, united front oriented, religious policy that was operative during 1958-1966, to a hard-line policy which left no room for religion in the new revolutionary society. Although no documents on religious policy were published during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution (1969-1976), the actual practice of the state as carried out by its local revolutionary committees may be described as a policy of relegating religion to a position of illegality and suppressing it from re-emergence. The state no longer tolerated some

religious practices. It simply outlawed them: the state had become a monolithic institution.

However, Chinese Christians continued to meet secretly in their homes, especially in the countryside. Such meetings were illegal and were subject to closure, and their leaders subject to arrest. Nevertheless, because of the people's need for comfort, community, and hope, needs which house church Christianity fulfilled, these house churches began to grow in size and in number. They sustained no formal relations with the state, but existed as illegal groups and were often suppressed by local authorities. The church and state relationship may be described as follows:



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Even after the death of Mao Tse-tung and the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976, the above state of affairs continued to exist. It was a totalitarian state which had no room for religion. Nevertheless, because China adopted an open door policy especially after the return of Teng Hsiao-p'ing to politics in 1977, the degree of religious suppression was lessened somewhat, but there was no change in the hard-line policy until April 1979.

DURING 1979-82 THE STATE BEGAN TO RESTORE ITS SOFT-LINE RELIGIOUS POLICY AND REVIVED THE PATRIOTIC ORGANIZATION

With the ascent of Teng Hsiao-p'ing to positions of power, as evidenced by the reform policies of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Central Committee (December 1978), the United Front Work Department was reconstituted in March of 1979, and along with it the Religious Affairs Bureau in April of the same year. Simultaneously, the Central Government began to restore its pre-Cultural Revolution soft-line policy of 'freedom of religious belief.' The church in Peking allowed Chinese worshippers from April 1979.

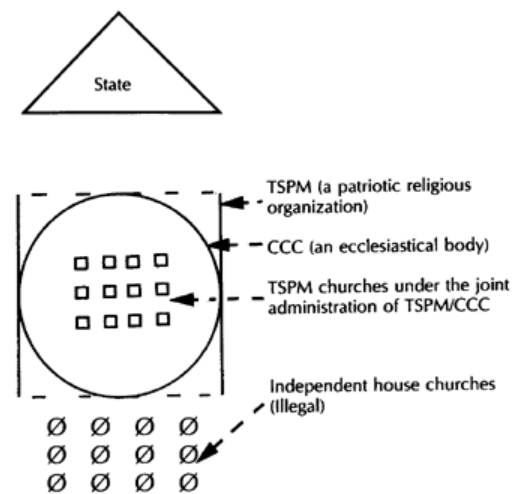
In August 1979 the Shanghai Committee of the Three-self Patriotic Movement was re-organized. Former TSPM churches, which had been closed down since 1966, started to re-open in larger cities from September, 1979. In February, the Executive Committee of the National Committee of the TSPM held an 'extended meeting' in Shanghai—the first time since 1961. In October of 1980, the TSPM held its third National Christian Conference in Nanking, and thereby formally reconstituted the defunct Protestant patriotic organization, the Three-self Patriotic Movement.

However, at the Nanking Conference another organization called the 'China Christian Council' (CCC) was formed. The TSPM has been described by its officials as a 'mass political organization' whose function is to assist the government in implementing its religious policy and to educate the church to become patriotic. The role of the new council is to take care of ecclesiastical matters in the TSPM churches, such as Bible printing, theological education, Christian publications, and conducting fraternal visits with churches in other lands. In reality, however, these two organizations are staffed by almost identical committee members and they almost always meet jointly.

To the government the TSPM is a patriotic religious organization, but to the church councils in other lands, the CCC is a church body representing the church in China, and so

the name China Christian Council is used when TSPM leaders go abroad for goodwill trips.
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The situation of church and state relations during this period may be described as follows:



As the TSPM and the CCC began organizing themselves at the provincial level in 1981 and at the county-level during 1982, they ran into conflicts with the numerous house churches that had been flourishing since 1970. But in the countryside, house churches continued to grow in strength and number, though they had to operate as illegal entities, with their leaders subject to arrest. Yet they maintained their autonomy as Christian groups independent from state control.

DURING 1982-87 THE STATE CONSOLIDATED ITS CONTROL OF ALL CHURCHES

As stated earlier, the Party worked out a comprehensive religious policy for the present transitional stage of socialism, namely, the policy of 'freedom of religious beliefs' as contained in Document No. 19 published by the Central Committee and circulated to county level party secretaries. To study this policy, the TSPM held an extended P. 180 Executive Committee meeting in Peking in September 1982. Thereafter, the TSPM and the CCC in concert with the local RAB offices began to implement the 'three-designates' by urging existing house churches to join the TSMP/CCC. A few of them joined, but the remaining majority refused to do so, preferring to preserve their own ecclesiastical autonomy in order to conduct their ministries according to the teachings of Scripture. Those who refused to comply came under pressure beginning from August 1982, and experienced severe persecution during the latter part of 1983 lasting until the end of 1984. On the other hand, in those areas where there were no open churches, local authorities complied with the believers' requests to restore their former churches.

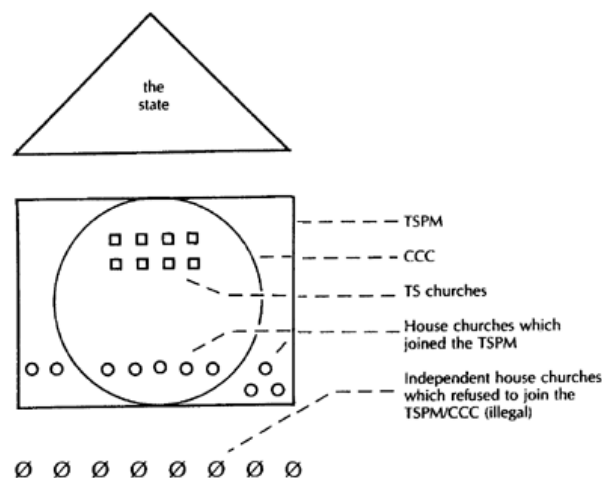
In October 1984 the Party passed a 'Resolution on Economic Institutional Reform', which became a national programme for further economic reform, especially in the urban market economy. As a result, the suppression of house churches was softened somewhat during 1985-86, and not a few house church leaders arrested during 1982-84 were released or had their sentences reduced. During this period a number of independent house churches in the countryside joined the TSPM county committees, paid their annual dues, but continued to conduct their religious activities as before, kept their ecclesiastical autonomy, and submitted themselves to TSPM policies. Still the majority of house

churches remained outside the TSPM. Hence, the church and state relationship during this period may be described as in the diagram opposite.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Church and state relations in socialist China since the founding of the PRC have been determined by the Chinese Communist Party. The Party took the initiative and dictated the terms for religious existence. Religious bodies, such as the Protestant church, were never given an opportunity to negotiate with the government in the development of a mutually satisfactory church and state relationship. From the very beginning, independent Christian bodies representing the Protestant church, such as the National Christian Council of China, were gently pushed aside and later forced to dissolve themselves into oblivion. The control of the state over Protestant Christianity was supreme and unquestioned.

From the very beginning the Party set up its own patriotic body, the Three-self Reform/Patriotic Movement, to lead and to direct Chinese Protestant churches, and caused it to become the spokesman for the [p. 181](#) Protestant churches. This directive has never been relaxed. The TSPM may be seen both as an arm of the state in the control of the church as well as the sphere of state toleration for church affairs. The realm of the TSPM is the realm of legality, and that realm also defines the limits of religious freedom. Within that realm is also socialist education for the clergy. The TSPM is more of a representative of the socialist state to the church than a representative of the church to the state.

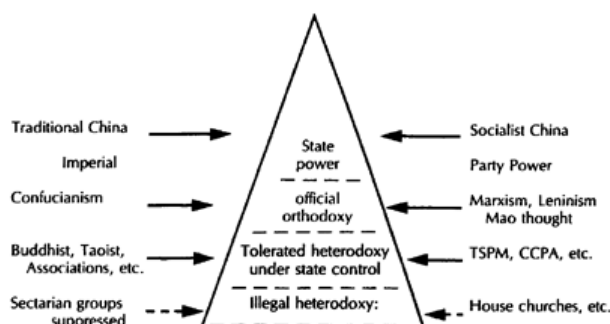


But in their propaganda, the TSPM and CCC claim to represent the Protestant church in China. Perhaps they do represent the 4,000 churches and the three million members under their administration; they certainly do not represent the more than 50 million believers who meet in at least 200,000 meeting points outside their control.

The relation of church and state in socialist China basically follows the pattern of state control of religions in traditional China. The parallelism between the two is very obvious, as shown overleaf.

In the matter of state control of religion, the present totalitarian socialist state inherited and replaced the former feudalistic, imperial state. Hence, it may be said that the current Chinese Communist religious policy is both totalitarian and feudalistic. If China is to make [p. 182](#) any significant progress towards modernization and develop any kind of authentic 'spiritual civilization', her leaders must re-examine both her current

theories and practices of religion and make changes appropriate to a modern, developing and democratic society.



The responses of the Chinese Protestant church to state initiatives may generally be described as passive. During the 1950–58 period the majority of the nearly ten thousand Christian workers gave in under pressure: signed the ‘manifesto’, accused their former co-workers, and joined the TSPM. Only a few chose the prophetic role of demonstrating loyalty to Christ and suffered for such witness. After 1958, those who remained in the Three-self churches accepted the leadership of the government in church affairs, but a number of faithful lay leaders began to develop underground meetings, accepting the consequences of civil disobedience for conscience’s sake.

During the Cultural Revolution years, Christians were forced to confess Christ, and such pressure and concomitant suffering trained many faithful believers for faithful witness in subsequent years. They learned from experience to be ‘gentle as doves and shrewd as serpents.’ They sought to witness Christ by living exemplary lives, to avoid confrontation with the hostile state, and they conducted an active programme of evangelism and church building in secrecy. These principles have now become standing policies for the house church movement even after the death of Mao.

There is no apparent conflict between TSPM pastors and the state. For them, they have already accepted the leadership of the state in church affairs. Some do experience inner conflicts, but in order to [p. 183](#) conduct their ministries within the realm of legality, they have to confine themselves to the limits determined by the state. The house church leaders who choose not to join the TSPM do so in order to express their singular loyalty to Christ in church affairs and to have the freedom to conduct evangelistic work according to the leading of the Spirit of God.

From the churches’ viewpoint, the basic issues in church and state in a socialist country like China are essentially three: (1) the question of lordship for the church: who is the Lord of the church, Christ or the state; (2) the question of evangelism: to evangelize or not to evangelize? (3) the universal character of the church: should a national church cut off her fellowship with the international body of Christ or not?

In the case of the Chinese socialist state, the above conflicts cannot be resolved until the state abandons its adherence to a system of Ideology which its rulers consider as orthodox, thereby condemning all its Competitors as heterodox. Secondly, until there is a genuine separation between party policy and state government according to law, the pattern of state control of religion can hardly be changed. Finally, Until China comes to adopt a policy of ideological pluralism, Christianity cannot enjoy genuine religious freedom under law. These, therefore, are future challenges for those who pray for China and who wish China well.