

Christianity in China

Written by Mei Kangjun

Translated by Zhu Chengming



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Preface

According to historical records, the Jing Church, which was introduced into Tang Dynasty in 635 AD, was the first Christian religion that entered China. It later died out. When Christianity once again came to China in the 19th century, it unfortunately connected itself with the colonial expansion and invasion of the western world. In the early years of its preaching in China, Christianity grasped privilege as it resorted to force and unequal treaties, however, it met with the Chinese people's repeated resistance owing to the political and cultural which led to frequent occurrences of missionary cases. As a result, it developed very slowly in China in that period and in the nearly 150 years from 1807 when Christianity (Protestantism) was introduced into China to 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded, it only developed to a Church with 700 thousand believers. In the 1950s, to shake off the old image of Christianity as a "foreign religion", the Chinese Christians launched the Three-self Patriotic Movement of self-rule, self-reliance and self-development, and on this basis established the National Committee of the Three-self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China.

The Three-self Patriotic Movement not only pushed the Chinese Church to realize self-rule, self-reliance and self-development, but also drove it towards the goal of “Three-good”, namely good self-rule, good self-reliance and good self-development.

In June 2004, under the great support and help of the central government, the State Bureau of Religious Affairs and the Shanghai Municipal Government, the National Committee of the Three-self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China and the China Christian Council (abbreviated as the TSPM/CCC) took over the Trinity Church in Shanghai and its annexed building as their new office building. The TSPM/CCC have set up the following departments: Overseas Relations Department, Training Department, Publication Department, Tian Feng Editorial Department, Social Service Department, Research Department, Administration Office, etc. They are dedicated to the overall development of the Christian Church in China.

There are now more than 16 million Christians in China, with more than 55 thousand churches or gathering places and about 27 thousand clergymen. There are 18 theological schools in China together with lots of training centers.

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1. “New Opportunity, New Start”

After the founding of the People's Republic of China on Oct. 1st, 1949, Mr. Wu Yaozong, an outstanding leader of the Chinese Christian Church, launched the Three-self Patriotic Movement, which brought about fundamental changes to Christianity in China. Since then, the Chinese Christian Church had emerged from the control of Foreign Missions and transformed itself from a tool of imperialist aggression to an independent Christian Church run by Chinese Christians and practicing self-rule, self-reliance and self-development. From 1954 when the first National Conference of the Chinese Christian Church was held to September 2000 when the celebration for the 50th anniversary of the Three-self Patriotic Movement was held in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the half-century history

had proved that God had, through the channel of the Three-self Patriotic Movement, made the Chinese Christian Church back to the principles of the Bible and more compliant with the Church's historical traditions and thus more pleasant to the Chinese people in the course of Chinese social development. Just like Bishop K.H. Ting, Honorary Chairman of the National Committee of Three-self Patriotic Movement, Honorary President of China Christian Council and Dean of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, put it: “The Chinese Christianity has found that God has made two arrangements: one is the policy of free religious belief stipulated by Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai; the other is the Three-self Patriotic Movement initiated by the Chinese

Christians themselves. With the two arrangements, the Chinese Christian Church is developing instead of dying. I can say these two arrangements are evidence that God is preparing new opportunities and a new start for us." When the Chinese Christian Church has totally shaken off its colonial features and never been separated from the Chinese people, it will be rooted deeper in the Chinese culture and develop with distinctive Chinese characteristics.



The TSPM/CCC were holding a grand unveiling ceremony for their new office building located at No. 219, Jiujiang Road of Shanghai on 6 June, 2004

The Trinity Church, which is located beside the TSPM/CCC new office building at No. 219, Jiujiang Road of Shanghai, was first built between 1866 to 1869. It is a Gothic religious building. As the earliest church in Shanghai built by the British Anglican Churches, it is also one of the earliest among all contemporary religious buildings in Shanghai. The square clock tower was added in the southeast corner of the church in 1893, of which the awl-like top was composed of four small acmes and a big one in the middle. It was the highest building in Shanghai at that time and is viewed as symbolization of old Shanghai.



The three generations of Chinese Christian leaders: Bishop K.H. Ting, Luo Guanzong, Han Wenzao, Ji Jianhong and Cao Shengjie met in Nanjing

Bishop Ding Guangxun was born in Shanghai in 1915. He studied in St. John's University in Shanghai, Columbia University in the U.S. and the New York Concord Theological School. As a theologian, he is one of the most important leaders of Chinese Christianity. He is now Honorary Chairman of the TSPM/CCC. The Collected Works of K.H.Ting published in 1998 is his representative theological work.

Luo Guanzong was born in 1920. He graduated from the Department of Politics with the Fudan University. He has long assumed leadership in the Shanghai Young Men's Christian Association and the Shanghai Committee of the Three-self Patriotic Movement. He was elected Chairman of the National Committee of the Three-self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China in its 6th National Conference.

Han Wenzao was born in Shanghai in 1923. He graduated from St. John's Shanghai with a Bachelor's degree in civil engineering. He worked for the student Christians and the Chinese Young Men's Christian Association for quite a long time and was once President of the China Christian Council and Vice-Chairman and Secretary-general of the Peace Committee of the Chinese Religious World.

Ji Jianhong was born in a Christian family in 1932. He graduated from the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and had worked in the Jiangsu Christian Church since 1980. He actively participated in the leadership work of the TSPM/CCC and gave lectures frequently. He was elected Chairman of the National Committee of the Three-self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China and Deputy Dean of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 2002.

Cao Shengjie was born in Shanghai in 1931. He graduated from the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1956. He was once associate researcher with the Institute of Religious Studies in the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. He worked in the local churches for a long time and was appointed Pastor in 1988. He was elected President of the China Christian Council in 2002. He was elected Vice-chairman of the Peace Committee of the Chinese Religious World in 2004.



The three generations of Chinese Christian leaders met in Zhongnanhai on 23 Jan., 2003
(from left to right: Deng Fulin, Ji Jianhong, Luo Guanzong, K.H. Ting, Han Wenzao, Cao Shengjie)



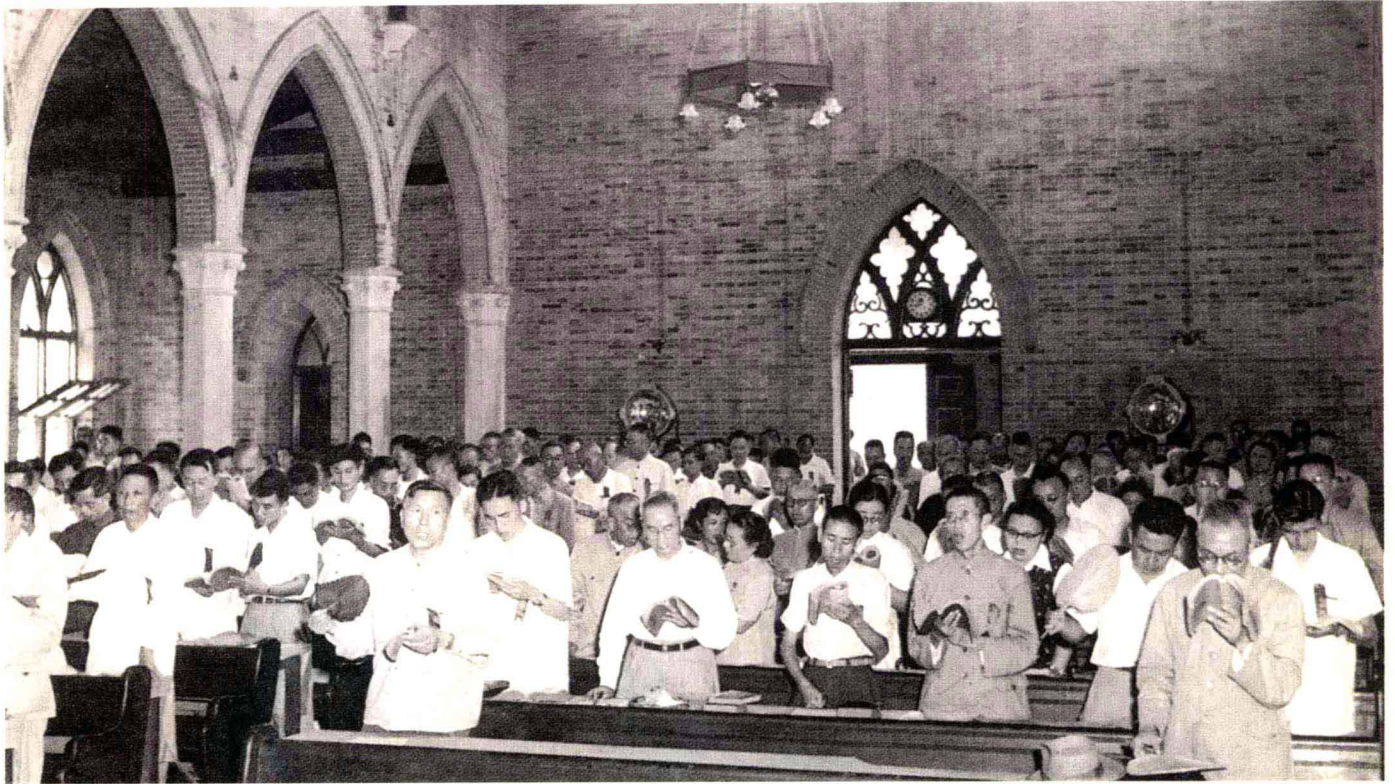
In December 2002, the Nanjing Amity Printing Co., Ltd. celebrated its printing of 30 million copies of Bible. It is one of the Bible printing centers in China



On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Three-self Patriotic Movement, the Beijing CC/TSPM held commemorative activities including the theme concert named “God Creates Glory” in September 2000



Mr. Shen Derong, Chairman of the Consultative Commission of the Shanghai Christian Church, was appointed part-time professor with the History Department, Shanghai Normal University in August 2001



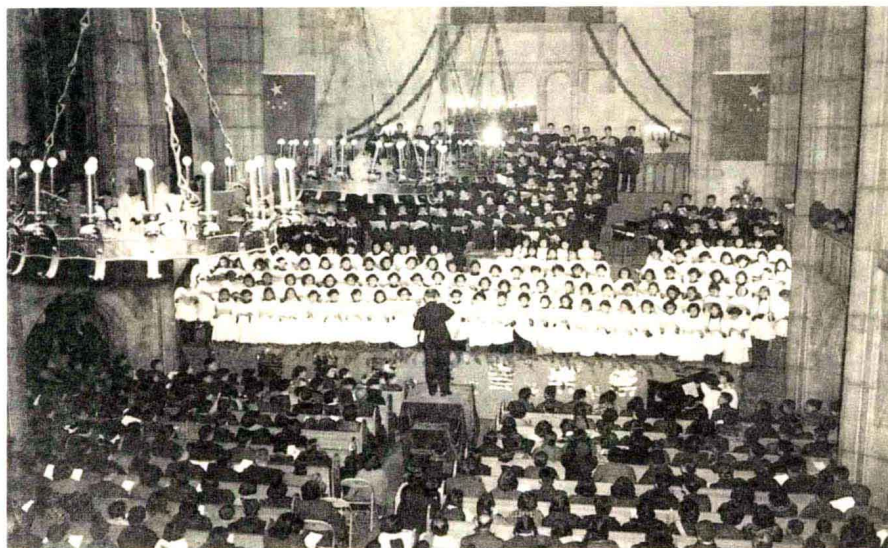
Delegates of the First National Conference of the Chinese Christian Church (Beijing, 1954)



The Third National Conference of the Chinese Christian Church (Nanjing, 1980)



Ethnic minority delegates who participated in the Fourth National Conference of the Chinese Christian Church in 1986



The Shanghai Union Choir was giving Christmas singing performances in Mu En Church in the 1950s