

THE CHURCH IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES — Part 2: CHINA

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There were three attempts made between 500 — 1500 to establish Christianity in China, namely, by the Nestorian Church during the T'ang Dynasty (618-907) but it did not succeed. Then the Nestorians tried again during the Mongol Dynasty (1280-1368) when the Roman Catholics also tried to establish Churches.

Both these attempts failed as a result of the resurgence of a vigorous isolationist nationalism under the Ming Dynasty. In 1807 Robert Morrison (L.M.S.) introduced the modern era of Protestantism in China and when the Communists took over in 1949, 3 million of the 600 million people were Roman Catholics and 1 million Protestants, i.e. 1 out of every 150 were Christian. There was a remarkable degree of unity achieved by the different Protestant Churches by 1949 when the Communist regime came into existence. As early as 1912 all the Anglican groups — societies from England, Canada, Australia and U.S.A. — amalgamated into one independent Church, the **China Hua Sheng Kung Hua** (Holy Catholic Church of China). The Lutherans came together in 1917 although this union is not as complete as that of the Anglicans. The Church of Christ in China, Presbyterian and Reformed in background, represents a much wider union. It also includes Congregational Churches, the English Baptists, the United Church of Canada, the United Brethren of Christ and even one conference of the Methodist Church. The Church of Christ in China was the largest Protestant Church. Eight Methodist mission boards (3 ex-England, 4 ex-U.S.A. and 1 ex-Canada) built up large and vigorous Churches in China. There have been many other denominations and sects, e.g. Christian and Missionary Alliance, the China Inland Mission established by Hudson Taylor. There are indigenous Churches like the True Jesus Church, the Little Flock, the Jesus Family, and the China Jesus Independent Church, etc.

The Nationalist Government of China seemed to have lost for many Chinese its "mandate of Heaven", because it was ineffective to meet the post-war problems of reconstruction and this government was hopelessly divided in the face of

Communist opposition. The Communist land reform propaganda in a land of feudalism was felt even in the ranks of the soldiers of Chiang Kai-Shek.

The People's Republic of China was formally inaugurated in Peking on October 1st, 1949. Land reform took place, industry was socialized and through the whole process the Communist party showed a surprising unity. The National People's Congress, constituted September, 1954, with 1226 members has a standing committee of 49 when not in session.

After the take-over by the Communist regime in 1949 the country was sealed off from the outside world. No missionaries on furlough could re-enter the country, travel restrictions were put on those still in the country. They were considered to be aliens on the Governing boards of schools and hospitals and had to be eased out of such positions as soon as possible. By 1950 many missionaries left, many had to leave. The Chinese Christian leaders drew up 'The Christian Manifesto' in this same year. The new regime accused Christianity of Western imperialism and the Chinese Church leaders tried to show their loyalty to the new regime through this manifesto drawn up mainly by Y. T. Wu, secretary of the Y.M.C.A., and later the leader of the so-called Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Cho-En-Lai gave his consent to the Manifesto which was finally published in July, 1950. In this Manifesto they state that Christianity has made a not unworthy contribution to Chinese society but that it became consciously or unconsciously associated with imperialism against which the Church is called upon to react. Christians are called upon to manage their own affairs and to see clearly the evils of imperialism. A patriotic and democratic spirit has to be inculcated, foreign personnel and financial aid

should be rejected; closer unity amongst the denominations should be their aim and the Church must relate itself to social and economic problems.

The denunciation of the Missionary movement increased in intensity. Many mistakes were made by the mission boards in earlier years. To carry through the complete re-orientation of Christian thought in the new China a new Church organization was necessary and this was provided by the so-called **Three Self Reform Movement**. The "Three Self" refers to the old dictum of Henry Venn, namely "Self-support, self-government, and self-propagation". The power of the purse strings was often used by missionaries to determine Church policy. Under Government direction this inter-denominational Church agency worked for the complete independence of the Chinese Church from all foreign control. In April, 1951, the Three Self Reform Movement was formed which under Y. T. Wu aligned the Church with the State. The denunciation movement began. Outstanding missionaries were attacked by these Church leaders who supported the Government and in this way received Government support. Leslie Lyal in his book "Come Wind, Come Weather", has a chapter entitled "The Manifesto of Betrayal."

People were trained in the Communist theory, preachers indoctrinated. The first indoctrination class for preachers was held in 1953. One of the heresies of Communism is that a process of reformation of society is the only remedy against evils. The Chinese Christians challenged the other worldly emphasis of Christian teaching. Chinese Christians credit communists for their unselfish motives of service to the Communist people. Y. T. Wu says the priest and Levite typify the religious people of the world — they pass by on the other side whereas the Samaritan typifies the non-religious people, i.e. the Communists. They minister to human need. Y. T. Wu has tried to indicate that there is an organic relation between faith and works, theory and practice. In the Chinese system representations are given in the people's congresses to various social groups so that Christians are also represented. They are allowed one speech in order to report on the general situ-

(Continued on page 11)

The Church in Communist Countries

(Continued from page 8)

ation in the Church and thus "there is more official recognition in this regime than in any preceding one that the Church has a legitimate position in society." Indoctrination took place through participation. Christians e.g. assisted in the Land Redistribution Programme.

Y. T. Wu is supported by men like Y. C. Tu, Kiang Wenham, Liu Liang-mo, Z. T. Kaung (Methodist), T. C. Chao, Marcus Cheng (Lutheran), T. C. Bau, K. H. Ting. Evangelist Wang Ming-Tao reacted against Y. T. Wu who according to him sought "the way of compromise and adaptation". He tried to destroy the very foundations of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. His 'Credo' was the first outspoken opposition to Y. T. Wu and his followers. This 'Credo' says F. W. Price is a monument in the history of the Chinese Church. He was a severe critic of the Social Gospel which is in fact more "social" than gospel. Y. T. Wu states in his book **Dark and Light**, "Besides the Bible there is a Christian theology which directly and indirectly is developed from the Bible, including the doctrines of Incarnation, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, Trinity, Last Judgment, Second Coming, etc. These are irrational mysterious beliefs... I cannot accept such beliefs". Wang Ming-Tao reacts "Let those who believe in the Bible and saving grace unite with the party of unbelievers; let the Church and Society unite; let Christ and Satan unite; let light and darkness unite; unite, unite! And the result of such union is simply the creation of a great Babylon". Wang Ming-Tao was in many ways an extreme fundamentalist but he has voiced an important point of view. Popular feelings was on his side. Many of the indigenous Church leaders were attacked and imprisoned.

The Church in China has reopened contacts with the West. Individuals and Church delegations went and reported that Church life is proceeding quite normally, and that the Chinese Christians are more involved in the life of the nation than

formerly. The first official Church visit was from Australia in November, 1956 (Anglican). A new period of suppression started in 1957. In 1958 the organization of Communes and the Great Leap Forward programmes were inaugurated. Something of a **modus vivendum** has been arrived at between Protestant Christianity and the Chinese Communist party. This party however, remains as blatantly atheistic as ever. As far as the future is concerned there is ground for deep concern: Many of the courageous leaders of the Church have been silenced; the complete isolation from the Church in the other parts of the East and also the West; Church activities have been restricted; Church publications have steadily decreased; few books on theology or Bible study have appeared since 1949. "Tien Feng" is the only periodical. Theological schools have decreased in numbers as well as students — 250 for a Church of 700,000. Christian students are refused permission to go to colleges because they are considered "politically unreliable". Christian doctors, nurses and teachers do not easily get promotion. The fact that the Church still exists is a hopeful sign although the number of professing Christians has dropped since 1949. Chinese Church leaders believe the Church will advance.

(To be continued)

Die Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid-Afrika en die Sending

(Vervolg van bladsy 6)

en Indonesië selfs nou nog is, sal hulle met angs vervul wees. Ja, selfs in die grootste gedeelte van Europa is die groot massa nog maar uiters dom, korsig en onbewus van wat daar vir hulle op die spel is. Dis gewoonlik slegs maar die enkeles wat die leiding moet neem. Derhalwe mag ons die betekenis van daardie uitsonderings, al is hulle ook hoe gering — selfs maar een uit 'n duisend of uit vyfduisend — nie onderskat nie. Dit sal al hoe meer duidelik word dat dit daardie enkele uitsonderings is wat die groot, ongeletterde massa langs die regte weg die toekoms in moet

lei. In elk geval bewys hierdie uitsonderings dat daar skielik dinge kan gebeur wat nie volgens die gewone wette van geleidelikheid verklaar kan word nie. En as ons dit in gedagte hou is daar wel iets wat van beslissende waarde kan wees.

Daar is my meegedeel dat ons eintlik ons hele Bantoe-onderwys veel meer by hulle stamlewe, hulle kultuur en hulle moontlikhede moet aanpas — ons moet dit „Bantoeseer”. Ja, as ons dit maar kon doen. As ons hulle maar net weer in hulle stamverband kon terugplaas en weer van vooraf met 'n skoon lei begin! Maar dit sal ons nooit geheel-enal kon vermag nie. Hierdie mense het reeds 'n voorsmakie van die moderne wêreld met al sy gevare en versoeking gekry, en ons sal hulle nooit weer rustig in hulle kraal kan terugkry nie. Hulle het iets van ons wêreld se onsekerheid en onrus oorgeërf — hulle het ander mense geword, en dit kan nie weer ongedaan gemaak word nie. Ons kan hulle nie probeer terugdwing in 'n leefwyse wat hulle nie meer wil of kan aanvaar nie. Daar het in Suid-Afrika 'n belangrike verslag oor die Bantoe-onderwys verskyn, waarvoor ek innig dankbaar is. Ek besef die ontsaglike groot probleme waarmee die owerhede ten opsigte van ons Bantoe-onderwys te kampe het, maar van een ding ek is baie seker — en dit is dat ons die loute wat in die verlede begaan is, nie weer maklik sal kan regstel nie. Dáárvor het daar al te veel gebeur, en te veel veranderinge ingetree. Ons kan nie meer ons standpunt grond op die Bantoe soos hy was nie, ons sal dit moet grond op die Bantoe soos hy tans is.

VREES

Ek het myself menige keer gedurende die weke van my besoek dit afgepra of die Afrikaner enige simpatie vir die Bantoe koester (om nie eers van die woord „liefde” melding te maak nie), en van vele wat ek ontmoet het, kan ek sonder enige aarseling sê dat dit wel die geval is. Simpatie vir die Bantoe as kind; vir die goedge, onroesele, kinderlike Bantoe wat selfs in sy ondeugsaamheid nog maar oerdom is; en simpatie