

# CCCOWE Declaration

## Introduction

The "Chinese Congress on World Evangelization" (abbreviated CCOWE) originated with a vision for the accomplishment of a specific mission. In July 1974, at the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, over sixty Chinese delegates from various parts of the world met together for prayer and fellowship. They received a common vision that upon the foundation of unity in the Word of God and at the threshold of Christ's return, the Chinese Church must be awakened to coordinate its various gifts in a concerted effort to fulfill the Great Commission through world evangelization. It was then decided that a Chinese Congress on World Evangelization should be held. A committee was elected immediately to begin its preparation. "Vision and Mission" was set as the theme of the Congress.

We thank the Lord for enabling CCOWE to take place in Hong Kong, August 18-25, 1976, with one thousand five hundred participants from twenty-seven districts in various parts of the world. After eight days of prayer, devotion, fellowship, and discussion, it was felt that certain key issues which mark our present age should be resolved.

1. **WE MUST BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN TWO GENERATIONS.** While society today is facing a serious "generation gap," the Church must put into practice the biblical teaching of a definite order of the old and the young. Barriers between generations must be replaced by love, with the old cherishing the simplicity and energy of the young, and the young respecting the spiritual experience of the old. Older pastors should wholeheartedly train younger pastors to become their successors and offer them opportunities for further study, uniting heart and mind with them to more effectively proclaim the Gospel.
2. **WE MUST BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN OLD AND NEW.** God's Word is established in heaven and the Gospel truth is timeless. Though the basic belief of our faith is unchangeable, our strategy and method of the Gospel proclamation must be adaptable to a changing world situation, to current trends, and to the intellectual

leadership of the younger generation. We must adopt appropriate measures to obtain desired results. CCOWE must promote understanding and dialogue between the old and new thinking, and thus strengthen the impact of the Gospel and win many more men for the Lord.

3. **WE MUST BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN EAST AND WEST.** Generally speaking, the Oriental Church tends to stress the deepening of spiritual life, while the Western Church emphasizes results. Chinese Christians are being scattered among both eastern and western nations, so naturally they have adopted the strengths of both. CCOWE must serve to bring East and West together to help develop the strengths of both and to promote participation by both so that the propagation of the Gospel may obtain results hitherto unknown.
4. **WE MUST BRIDGE GAPS BETWEEN DENOMINATIONS.** Throughout church history Satan has succeeded time and again in hindering unity and cooperation among churches. He knows that when churches unite together against outside forces, the Gospel will be preached to the ends of the earth, Christ will return, and will bring about Satan's own destruction. Therefore, CCOWE must work to remove denominational barriers, to promote understanding, and to strengthen fellowship, so that Chinese churches may pool together manpower and resources to realize their potentialities for the glory of God and benefit of mankind.

The following statements comprise CCOWE's declaration of faith and ministry in today's world.

## **THE BIBLE**

The whole Bible, consisting the sixty-six books of both the Old and the New Testaments, is divinely inspired, without error, and absolutely truthful; it is the authority for the faith of the Church and the source of saving truth for mankind. The biblical record is indeed based upon historical facts; but its central theme is an infinite, personal God, Whose Son Jesus Christ entered human history through incarnation and provided salvation for mankind. Hence, the Bible could not be comprehended by human reason alone, nor could it be investigated solely

by logical procedure. Rather, it is through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, that we may come to the understanding of biblical truth. Since we believe the Bible is the Word of God, the Church must proclaim the whole message of the Bible with clarity and power. We should never take the parts as if they were the whole, nor should we use scripture passages out of context. We should avoid emphasizing a certain doctrine to the exclusion of other biblical truth. We must seek to understand the meaning of the Bible in the original meaning in order to avoid erroneous interpretations which lead to heresy. The Chinese Church must adopt procedures to cooperate in direct, in-depth study of the Bible in order to obtain accurate and full understanding, that the wonder of God will be revealed by the light of His Word, and readers and listeners of the Word will grow in their new life with him.

## **JESUS CHRIST**

Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior of mankind. Although He is God, yet in order to fulfill the redemptive will of God the Father, He willingly laid aside His heavenly glory, and became a man, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.

He is wholly God and wholly man. He lived a sinless life on earth for over thirty years and then was crucified on the cross. By the shedding of His own blood, He satisfied God's righteous demand and accomplished God's gracious redemption. Three days after His crucifixion, He rose from the dead. Later, He ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us. Soon He will return to earth to judge the world. He is Lord of the whole universe, having power to forgive sins. Whoever by faith receives Jesus Christ as his Savior shall be saved. But whoever refuses to believe in Him shall not be saved, for outside Christ, there is no salvation.

## **THE SALVATION OF MANKIND**

Adam, our forefather, was created by God in His own image. At the beginning he enjoyed complete and free fellowship with God. However, through the temptation of Satan, he deliberately violated God's command by eating the fruit of the tree of good and evil. He thus sinned against God. Because Adam sinned, every man born into the world, as his descendant, is guilty of sinning against God also. The penalty of sin is ever-lasting punishment. But Jesus

Christ became man in order to accomplish God's plan of redemption for mankind. To be saved, man must repent of his sins, believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and accept Him as Savior. Whoever does not repent and believe in Jesus Christ shall not obtain eternal life but shall perish. Believing in Christ is a personal decision which every man must make for himself.

The new birth is a personal experience which a believer must have.

## **THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL**

The Gospel is the heart of God's eternal plan. It was foreordained and foreknown by the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - before the creation of the world. God created man to enjoy His love and to have fellowship with Him. But because of man's disobedience, he is separated from God and is under eternal damnation. Therefore, God sent His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to provide salvation for mankind. All who by faith receive Jesus Christ as their Savior obtain new life and become God's chosen children and partake eternal blessing and joy of God's family.

This Gospel is the power of God which restores man into fellowship with Himself and can deliver man from eternal damnation. But man, being spiritually dead and ignorant of his own condition, does not seek salvation. The Church, therefore, must actively proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Before Jesus' departure from this earth, He commanded the disciples: "Go and preach the Gospel to all nations." Proclaiming the Gospel is the task of the Church and of each individual Christian.

## **THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

At the end of this age, Jesus Christ will return in power and glory. When Christ returns, the saints who had passed away will be resurrected. The bodies of the saints that are alive will be changed. All will be taken up together to meet the Lord in the air and to be with Christ forever. All unbelievers, whether living or dead, will be judged by Christ for eternal punishment. No one knows the exact date of Christ's return. Therefore, Christians must be watchful and be ready to meet the Lord.

## **THE CHURCH**

The Church is the body of Christ, and Christ is the head of the Church. Every born again Christian who possesses the life of Christ is a member of this body. Although differences of historical background, geographical circumstances, doctrinal emphases, and manner of service have prompted the formation of various denominations and church organizations, yet the body of Christ is one, and all believers are members of this one body. For this reason, spiritual fellowship should be normal among all true Christians. In the past, Chinese churches have come short in this area. May God help us from this time on to unite together, to break down traditional and man-made walls of separation, and to establish deeper fellowship among all members of the body. Furthermore, since the Church is the body of Christ, every member of the body must have a living union with Him. Without the head, the body is dead; without the life of Christ, one is not a member of the body and hence cannot have spiritual fellowship with other members of the body.

The Church has two missions: Internally, the Church is where believers gather to worship, to fellowship, to study and to serve. Therefore, the Church must adequately provide for Christian worship and fellowship as well as be competent in teaching the truth and training believers to serve. Externally, the Church is commissioned to preach the Gospel unto the ends of the earth. The existence, testimony, life and work of each Christian is the means which God uses to spread the Good News. The Church is absolutely indispensable in the task of proclaiming the Gospel and teaching the Word.

## **THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH**

The unity of the Church in truth, is divinely appointed goal. This goal, that Christians should be one in Christ, is set forth in the intercessory prayer of Jesus as recorded in John 17. Any true church union must be based on the unity of its inner life and not on outward organization. Without a common life, any union is unthinkable.

In the tradition of the Church, Christians with similar beliefs and practices grouped themselves within denominational boundaries holding various viewpoints on secondary matters - a situation which greatly prevented church unity. This unnecessary sectarianism not

only seriously affected the propagation of the Gospel, but has also damaged the witness of the Church before men. We call upon all who possess the life of Christ and who are moved by the same Spirit to seek to strengthen our unity in Christ, to establish more open communications, and to plan for better co-operation, in order to express more positively the glorious testimony of our unity and love in life, in worship and in service.

## **THE TASK OF EVANGELIZATION**

Evangelization is the debt which the Church owes to the world. A church that does not preach the Gospel is not faithful to its calling and cannot expect power and blessing from God. The fundamental meaning of evangelism is to expose the sinfulness of man in the light of biblical teaching, to declare the righteousness of God, and to proclaim redemption in Jesus Christ. Although other related ministries such as medicine, relief, social charity and education, sometimes assist in the propagation of the Gospel, they nevertheless cannot substitute for the fundamental task of evangelism.

"To make disciples of all nations" is the Lord's own command to the Church. Hence it is the goal of evangelization. But to be the Lord's disciple, is not merely to believe in Jesus and to be born again. After re-generation, one has to learn to follow the Lord in complete obedience, to magnify the Lord in his life, to grow in truth, to fulfill his own obligation in the service of the Church, to maintain steady growth in worship and fellowship, and to gradually mature unto the likeness of Christ.

In order to achieve the desired results of reaching more people for Christ, we should, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, employ modern technological knowledge such as in-depth analysis of target groups, experimentation in church growth, tools of mass communication, and research in the overall strategy for evangelism. The true value of evangelization is not determined by outward results, but by its faithfulness to the teaching of the Bible and by the working of the Holy Spirit. Whatever method we employ must be in accord with biblical principles, and should not distort fundamental truth. To emphasize methods to the neglect of the theological content of the Gospel, will neither bring glory to God nor benefit to men.

## **THE TASK OF OVERSEAS MISSIONS**

Jesus Christ clearly called His Church to be a witness of the Gospel unto the ends of the earth and to make disciples of all nations. The Lord's command was not only given to well-developed and well-organized mature churches, but to all churches. In this area, due to the lack of vision, the Chinese Church has been inactive and cannot deny its failure in the past. As a result, it has missed many of God's blessing. Chinese churches must now join hands and under God's grace labor together to compensate for the past serious shortcomings in missionary outreach.

In recent years, God has graciously led and protected Chinese churches, that in most cases, they have maintained the purity of faith. God has raised up and blessed Chinese churches, student fellowships, and university Bible study groups in all parts of the world. God has a purpose in blessing Chinese churches, and we must strive to fulfill that purpose which God ordained.

The Chinese Church is facing a historical challenge in taking up a dual- responsibility of missionary endeavor: to reach the Chinese worldwide, especially the eight hundred million of our kinsmen, and also to reach all mankind. Chinese people are scattered all over the earth, and this fact gives us a unique opportunity to reach Chinese everywhere with the Gospel. There have been individual Chinese churches which have made good efforts toward this direction in the past. Today, all Chinese churches should unite in an effort to systematically gather data, to establish a living union, and to totally mobilize Chinese Christians everywhere for evangelism.

Christ's commission to the Church is not only to evangelize our own kindred, but all mankind. Therefore, the Chinese Church must fulfill its obligation to preach the Good News of Christ to the ends of the earth and to all peoples of all races.

Therefore, let us unite together under careful planning, mobilize workers of special trainings, and truly discover the potential resources of the Church. In order to satisfy the hunger of the world for the Gospel, let us borrow the experience and technical expertise of western missions to launch missionary work among all races. Let us support this great task with money and with prayer, and encourage young people to answer God's call to dedicate

their lives for overseas missionary work. At the same time, let theological institutions prepare to meet the needs of sending societies by incorporating missionary trainings into their curriculum to equip young people for cross-cultural evangelism.

## **THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND WRITING**

The degree of comprehension of biblical knowledge often reflects the maturity of a church. The Chinese Church has a history of almost two hundred years, yet as a whole, it has not achieved corresponding depth with regard to the knowledge of God's Word. Up to the present, Christian publications, especially those of the research and reference categories, have mostly come from the west. This shows that the Chinese Church has not yet responsibly made known the Word of God in the context of its own culture. In recent years, the number of educated members in the Chinese Church have increased considerably; many have received higher theological education training and are well grounded in the knowledge of theology and the Bible. But so far, there is noticeably little being published. This is an area which must receive special attention of the Chinese Church. Henceforth, Chinese churches must unite to adopt effective measures to promote diligent study in the areas of theology and church principles. We must enlist scholars who have a sound background in Chinese thought and adequate training in the Bible and theology; we must provide suitable situations for research and writing in order to encourage publications of literatures that have both breadth and depth. The standard of Chinese Christian publications must be upgraded so that the spiritual level of the Chinese Church might be raised.

## **THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

The fundamental task of the Church is to evangelize. But in order to make the incomparable love of God known to the world, the Church must demonstrate its love by extending its witness through areas of social concern. The Church cannot be indifferent toward the needs of society. Since Chinese churches are scattered throughout many parts of the world, they should fulfill their obligation to their host countries in this respect. Ministering to certain social and physical needs is a legitimate concern of the Church, and, at other times, it may be the responsibility of an individual Christian. Whether social concern is done by the

Church or by individual Christians, such demonstrations of concern can pave the way for the Gospel and effectively influence society. When the Gospel is widely proclaimed and the number of Christians increased, social trends can be altered. This, in turn, enables the Church to gain respect, so that the Gospel can be more effectively and more widely proclaimed.

## **CONCLUSION**

By the grace and mercy of God, CCOWE, through the participation of its delegates, has effectively endeavored to accomplish a historical breakthrough. Under the constraint of a common vision and the Great Commission, it has molded together the hearts of Chinese Church leaders, kindled a universal flame within the Chinese Church, and establish a new milestone in Chinese Church history. The Church now has to march forward boldly without looking back, and unite together in heart and mind to proclaim the Gospel. Let the mind of Jesus Christ be our mind, and let us mind the things of our heavenly Father. Let us imitate the fragrant myrrh of the Smyrna church in being faithful unto death. Let us follow the example of brotherly love of the Philadelphia church in fulfilling the task of evangelism. Let us pattern after the heavenly assembly and constantly sing praises unto our God!

There is one regret at the Congress. Due to the limitation of physical facilities, CCOWE could not accommodate more participants. Many gifted and influential colleagues, who have a burden for the Gospel, could not participate in our discussion of important matters. It is our sincere belief that without their prayer and financial support, the results which are seen would not have been possible. Therefore, in addition to giving thanks to our Heavenly Father for His provision and guidance, we pray that God will graciously remember those respected and beloved colleagues of ours. According to the biblical principle, "as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage," they, too, shall share the results and joy of the Congress. In order to offer more permanent help to Chinese churches, extensive post-Congress follow-up programs of a practical nature are being planned. It will need everyone's support and involvement. Suggestions based on spiritual wisdom and experience will always be valued. In these unstable last days when heresy abounds, let us unite our hearts and efforts in proclaiming the Gospel.

We are deeply grateful for the work of western missionary societies during the past two

hundred years. They have sent large number of missionaries to China, and under severe hardship they sowed the seed of the Gospel throughout the land. They not only invested their money and their effort, but many have even given their lives. We believe that God will abundantly reward them for their faithfulness. At this Congress, we reserved five percent of the total participant seats especially for western missionaries. We have benefited much from their lives and their labor of love to the Chinese people. We will continue to extend to them a friendly hand of cooperation in the Lord, so that the fruit of the Gospel may be spread far and wide. May God use all of us in these last days to be His brave and true witnesses, to fulfill the Great Commission and to welcome the Lord's return!