

## Instructions of the CPC Central Committee on Actively Promoting the Religious Reform Movement

(March 5, 1951)

To all central bureaus, branches and provincial and municipal committees:

A. The self-reliance and reform movement of Christianity and Catholicism has now been launched throughout the country. This is a mass movement of great political significance and should be actively led by all localities. The main purpose of this movement is to eliminate the influence of imperialist aggression on our culture and it is an important part of the anti-imperialist political struggle. In this movement, we must unite the majority of religious circles, organize, develop and consolidate the anti-imperialist united front of religious circles throughout the country, patiently carry out a lot of ideological persuasion work, inspire their patriotism, dispel their concerns, and should not act rashly, let alone create a tendency to oppress religions and exclude foreigners.

B. Summarizing past experience, in order to smoothly promote the self-government, self-support and self-propagation movement of Catholicism and Christianity, the following four conditions must be met, namely:

- (1) The government actively promotes it;
- (2) It is not afraid of the trouble of negotiating with the Chinese leaders at the top, but foreigners must be completely left out;
- (3) Patriotic education is carried out among the lower-level believers, mobilizing them to force the upper level to implement self-government, self-support and self-propagation;
- (4) For each unit of the church (churches, groups), it is necessary to consult with its Chinese leaders and prepare to solve its self-support problem economically.

C. In order to launch this movement, we should adopt a policy of active leadership rather than passive waiting. The reform declaration issued by Christians in July last year was directly promoted by the Central Committee. The resolution supporting the reform declaration was passed at the annual meeting of the All-China Christian Council held in Shanghai in October last year. It was produced under the active leadership of the East China Bureau. The "Catholic Self-reliance Reform Movement Declaration" issued by Guangyuan Catholics Wang Liangzuo and others was also produced under the active promotion of the Northern Sichuan Prefectural Committee. These experiences and all other experiences prove that any effective reform movement of Christianity and Catholicism cannot be a spontaneous movement of believers, but can only occur and develop under the active leadership and supervision of the Party and the People's Government; and as long as we adopt a positive policy, take the initiative to find their responsible persons to talk, explain the government's policies, and eliminate their concerns, we will definitely be able to mobilize the majority of them to carry out reforms, and ordinary believers have no choice but to reform for their own survival and interests.

In order to promote the reform of Catholicism from top to bottom, the Cultural and Educational Committee of the State Council invited more than 40 major upper-level Catholics in North China to hold a tea party on January 17. Comrade Zhou Enlai gave a speech, explaining the government's policy towards Catholicism in detail, calling on Chinese Catholics to love the motherland, sever the relationship between the church and the use of imperialism, and realize the policy of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation. The Catholics who attended the meeting expressed their acceptance of the government's call. After this tea party, they held a meeting and are currently preparing to issue a national declaration. Although there are still many people who are willing to

serve imperialism and the reactionary leaders in the Catholic Church, after the patriotic movement of Catholics is launched, the reform movement of Chinese Catholicism will also develop accordingly.

All major administrative regions and important provinces and cities should quickly follow this method and invite local Catholic and Christian leaders and progressive elements to hold tea parties or seminars (Catholic and Christian should be held twice) by the Cultural and Educational Committee or the Cultural and Educational Bureau to coordinate the work of mobilizing the lower levels with the promotion work of the upper levels. At the tea parties or seminars, important government officials should speak and pay attention to the following points:

(1) It is necessary to point out that the Chinese church was once used by imperialism as a tool to invade China and destroy the new China; at the same time, it is necessary to explain that the vast majority of believers are kind and patriotic. Distinguish the general believers from the minority of reactionary elements among the believers, especially foreign spies and invaders, in order to win over the majority.

(2) Warmly encourage believers to love the motherland. A good believer must be a good patriotic citizen. Only when the people's state is well managed can the people have a happy life. This is what any religion should support.

(3) The management of any religion should be truly in the hands of the Chinese and no outsiders should be allowed to manipulate it. Foreign invaders and spies must be eliminated. However, some foreign missionaries who have been in China for many years and are kind and law-abiding and do not engage in any political activities or take charge of church affairs can continue to stay.

(4) Regarding the relationship between Chinese Catholics and the Vatican, it should be clearly pointed out that the Vatican has been controlled by imperialist reactionary forces, especially American imperialist forces. Catholics across the country must fully understand and be vigilant about this. However, under the condition that the Vatican does not interfere in China's religious reform movement and does not carry out political activities in China, Chinese believers and the Vatican can still have purely religious relations. Imperialism wants to use Chinese Catholics through the Vatican to carry out activities to undermine New China, which is absolutely not allowed.

(5) To achieve self-government and self-propagation, all believers must work hard to support themselves. This is also completely possible. Because all religious undertakings do not require large expenses. The government will also be happy to help maintain the public welfare undertakings of the church that have achieved results and the religious buildings that are truly important. We must speak sincerely, give sufficient reasons, and try to use the language they are accustomed to to explain the problem; but our position must be firm and our attitude must be clear. After such tea parties or seminars, the Religious Affairs Office or other competent departments can establish regular relations with them and give regular promotion and leadership to their self-reliance and reform movement.

D. Negotiating with the church leaders to make them issue a declaration is to facilitate our patriotic education among the lower levels of the church. This patriotic education should be carried out even before the local church leaders issue a declaration. In Guangyuan and Guisui, Sichuan, we gathered Catholics (especially young students who believe in religion in schools) under appropriate names to train them in patriotism. The believers then forced the upper levels to issue a reform declaration. In many old liberated areas, the original churches no longer exist, but the church may send people to preach in the future. In these areas, it is very important to train the original believers in patriotism. For the education of believers, we should now focus on patriotism, avoid discussions on materialism and idealism, and do not hurt the religious feelings of believers. In the publications and pamphlets

compiled by progressive believers, we should also make them pay attention to the above principles. It is not in line with the facts and out of touch with the masses to describe Jesus as Marx. The work of educating believers on patriotism is very important today when the "Three-Self" movement has become a trend in the church. It should be carried out in a planned and comprehensive manner.

E. We should learn from the experience of Guangyuan and help all units of the church to achieve self-support. There are about 10,000 priests, pastors, monks, nuns, etc. who make a living from religion in the country. Among them, there are about 7,000 Chinese in the Christian faith and about 6,000 to 7,000 in the Catholic faith. The total number of the two is 13,000 to 14,000 Chinese, which is not a large number. The donations made by believers to the church are very small, but churches in various places have real estate and other properties. If we can find some ways to help them according to the experience of Guangyuan (renting the houses occupied by the government, helping them sell some properties to obtain funds, or even partially reducing some of their taxes, etc.), and appropriately reducing the excessively high salaries of their upper-level members, we can achieve the goal of making them self-support. What specific methods to adopt in various places need to be studied in detail by the government and the church in various places. However, the whole Party must understand that foreign imperialism has bought off a large number of Chinese believers with a small amount of money. It is worthwhile and certainly achievable for us to use the above method to make the Chinese church self-supporting and to make the believers break their relationship with imperialism economically and ideologically.

It is hoped that all localities will follow the above principles and seize the anti-American patriotic high tide to carry out this work. In the course of work, attention should be paid to discovering patriotic activists among Christians and Catholics, winning over and uniting them, giving them the necessary education and support, and making them the backbone of the self-reliance and reform movement of the Chinese church. For reactionary elements in Christians and Catholics, appropriate steps should be taken to expose their reactionary intentions and isolate them from the masses. When there is confirmed evidence of sabotage, it should be reported to the higher authorities for approval and legal action.

G. The Cultural and Educational Committee of the State Council of the Central People's Government is preparing to hold a national Christian conference in April to discuss the issue of further realizing the "Three-Self" movement. A similar national Catholic conference will be held in the second half of this year. The above work is the preparation for the conference. I hope you will actively promote it and make sure it is fruitful.

H. In addition to Christianity and Catholicism, we should also pay attention to promoting and encouraging the patriotic movements of Islam and Buddhism that are currently underway. Islam and Buddhism in China have few connections with imperialism, but they have great power in the country, especially in ethnic minority areas, and both have international influence. I hope that all localities will pay attention to studying the situation and problems in these two religions and cultivate progressive leaders among them.

I hope that all localities will report to the Central Committee in February on the situation and experience of the above work in progress