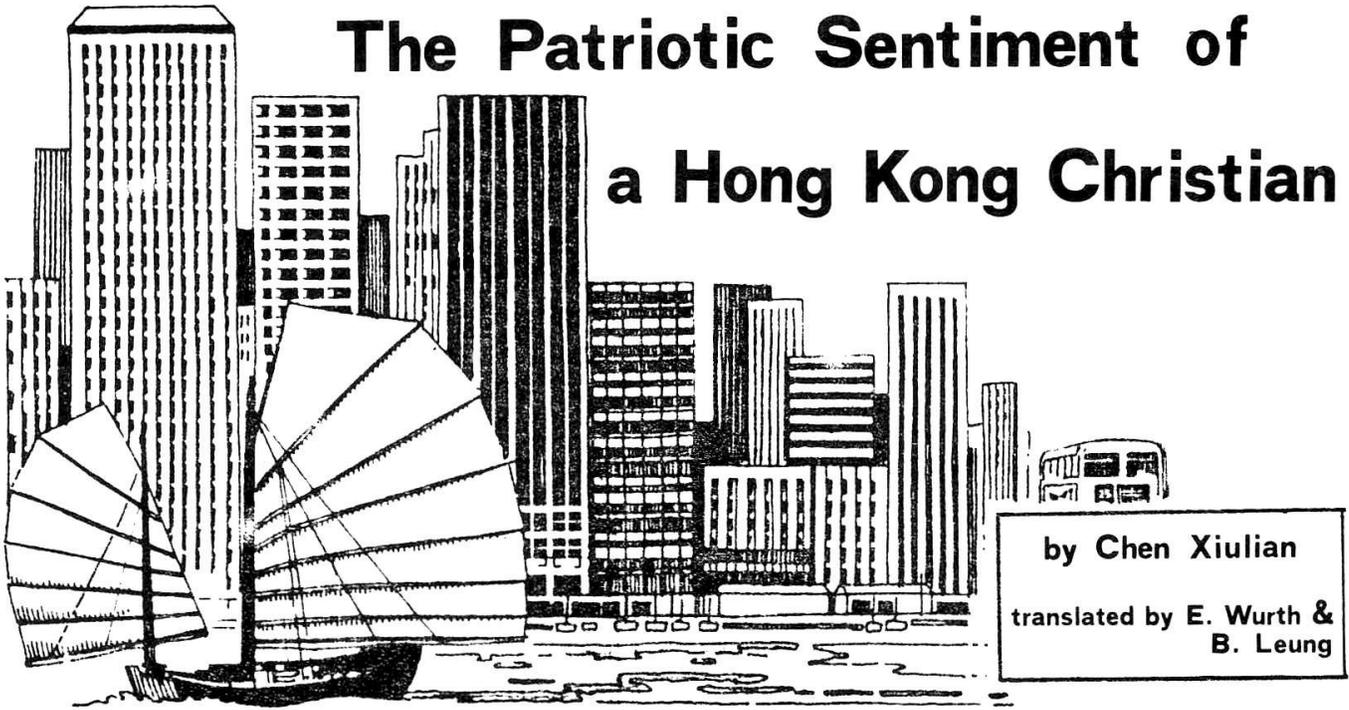


The Patriotic Sentiment of a Hong Kong Christian



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In order to present a wide spectrum of opinion on patriotism, we asked various organizations to submit articles on this subject. The following article was written by a Christian middle school teacher. We not only thank the author for her contribution, but also the friend at the New China News Agency who introduced the author to us.

Last year a professor at Hong Kong University, a typical Hong Kongite anxious about Hong Kong's future, went abroad with the intention of settling down there. This elderly gentleman had studied abroad in his youth, having received his doctorate from Oxford University. Because of his fluency in English, he experienced no difficulties with the language, nor had he any problems in communication. Nevertheless, he found it difficult to adapt to his new surroundings because of differences in race, nationality and life-styles. All these factors caused him to reconsider calmly his initial decision to leave. The longer he was away, the more he realized how close he felt to Hong Kong and to China, and how necessary for him it was to relate his own future to that of Hong Kong's. After a few months, he returned home.

There is in our country a long and glorious tradition of patriotism.

The sons and daughters of China have throughout history fought against foreign encroachment to safeguard the nation's sovereignty, its independence and unity, often at the cost of abandoning their families and shedding their blood. We find the lives of hundreds of thousands of these national heroes celebrated in our literature. Even today when we remember Deng Shichang (鄧世昌), Lin Zexu (林則徐), Wen Tianxiang (文天祥), Yue Fei (岳飛), and Qu Yuan (屈原), we are deeply touched by their heroic deeds and our respect for them overflows. Just as a pious Christian reveres the memory of Moses, David, John the Baptist, James and Simon Peter, so we, too, hold in high regard these our Chinese patriarchs.

For the Chinese, the sentiment of patriotism comes naturally. We are proud of the beauty of our land, the goodness of her people and the longevity of our history. Even when I apply rational analysis in terms of modern philosophy, psychology, sociology and other social sciences, I still cannot escape the following conclusions: in contrast to a man from outer-space, I am a man of this land; in contrast to other races, I am yellow; in contrast to foreigners, I am a Chinese. Because I am Chinese, I love China.

Someone remarked that when the Motherland is faring well, it is easy to love her. Who could not love a beautiful and tender Mother? But how should we treat her when she is faring poorly, when she is struggling with inner frustrations and the dangers of division?

It is true that our Motherland has passed through glorious days, for which she is rightly proud, but she has also had to endure times of great frustration, difficulty and humiliation. Does it not follow logically that each and every citizen must share the responsibility for her prosperity as well as her failures? Does it not also follow that those who stand at the forefront of a nation's history are her patriots, those men and women who lead history in its forward advance, and with unshaking faith, love and serve the nation no matter in what historical situation she finds herself? Take the familiar example of the father of our country, Dr. Sun Yatsen. He was at one and the same time both a pious Christian and a pioneer of democratic revolution. Enflamed with a burning patriotism, he led other patriots of his time in the struggle to achieve an independent, democratic and free China. His efforts eventually led to the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the destruction of a feudal system that had oppressed China for over 2,000 years. He struggled for China unceasingly throughout his entire life.

When we recall the sages and heroes of our history, we see their patriotism not only in their struggle against foreign encroachment, but

also in the dedication of their wisdom and energy to their nation's prosperity and progress. From their efforts in the fields of science, technology, education, and the arts, they created both material and spiritual wealth for the country. As early as 2000 BC, Li Bing (李冰), a master hydrologist, had built the Dujiang Dam in Sichuan Province, a masterpiece of water conservation. In contemporary history, there is Zhan Tianyou (詹天佑) an expert in railroad engineering, who relying solely on Chinese expertise and labour, built the railway line from Beijing to Zhang Jia Kou, and thereby won the acclaim of Chinese and foreigner alike. In our own times, we have the example of the geologist Li Siguang (李四光) who returned during the 1950's to participate in China's reconstruction. Working against innumerable difficulties, he eventually made important new geological discoveries that led to a reversal of the earlier conclusions that oil could not be found on the China mainland. By his zeal and persistence, he has written a new chapter in Chinese geological studies and opened the way for China's modern petroleum industry. The above three examples of patriotism are models of Chinese who served their country by placing their wisdom and learning at its disposal. They are merely three among an endless list of others.

We all realize that in recent decades our nation's progress has taken a zig-zag course, especially during the 50's and 60's when the mistakes of the CCP leadership caused much suffering for the whole nation. During this period, many Christians and intellectuals were subjected to much undeserved maltreatment. However, all of this is now in the past. Christians who have visited China recently have witnessed the reopening of churches and the spreading of the Gospel. Many have come to realize that the church, having been alienated from the nation, should now emphasize reconciliation. They suggest ways and means of fostering closer contact with non-christian people in order to become more identified with them, sharing common goals, and, thereby, achieving lasting reconciliation.



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A young Hong Kong scientist who had studies abroad in the U.S. remarked upon his return: "Like my mother, who no matter how weak or sick she might be is still my mother, so too, my Motherland, no matter how poor and backward she might be, she is still my Motherland." I personally feel that our church leaders, pastors and christians should act with foresight to strengthen our confidence in our future, not dwelling so much on past quarrels but acting on present possibilities for positive action. We should work towards uniting ourselves in a common effort to share in a common concern for the Lord and for the building up of the nation.

If one says that the Christians of China have a responsibility to offer themselves for the country, what of me - a Hong Kong citizen, a Hong Kong Christian, one who enjoys the Hong Kong system and its present life-styles and loves its complete religious freedom? Should I, in view of 1997, emigrate to another country if I am fearful of what possible changes the future might bring?

It is true that many reasons are offered for leaving Hong Kong. It is also true that some people have already left. Here each has the right to his own free choice, so we have no cause to blame someone for choosing to leave; however, China does belong to us, to you and to me, and we have a responsibility to share in and shape her future. Furthermore, Hong Kong is part of China's territory, a fact that is also acknowledged by the British government.

Is it not true that we have to search for our roots? If, as Christians, we do not have the courage to identify ourselves with our country, how can we expect our country and our people to identify with us? If we do not employ a Chinese measure to measure the feelings of the Chinese people, how can we share in the experiences, the life and yearnings of Chinese believers? What kind of a church would it be if it were not taking root in its own soil?

While it is accurate to say that I am a Hong Kongite and that I am a Hong Kong Christian, it is even more to the point to say that I am a Chinese Hong Kongite, that I am a Chinese Christian living in Hong Kong. We are Chinese and a part of the great Chinese people. We cannot ignore the fact that Hong Kong is part of China's territory. Should it not be seen as an unchangeable result of an on-going historical development that China should regain her sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997? Under such circumstances, then, we should resolve to stay on in Hong Kong, to grasp firmly our religious responsibility to continue to spread the Gospel here - the good shepherd does not abandon his flock.

"Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13,13) If we want to express our love for China after so many years of alienation from her, the most important thing is to begin to erase from our minds the doubts that are barriers which prevent us from uniting ourselves in common love and service.

There is an old Chinese saying, "The long separation will end in unification." The separation of the Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan has existed for too long a time. Should not we Christians be the catalysts in working for reunification?

In the Book of Psalms it is written: "How beautiful and good it is to have brothers living harmoniously together!" When we witness the divisions that exist in the world, and those existing between the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan, we must ask ourselves how we can promote positive communication through the practice of the virtues of tolerance, cooperation and charity?

Personally, I feel that to love God and to love one's nation are really two sides of the same coin. We are both the children of God and the children of our Motherland. Christ who became incarnate, the Word made flesh, was not born a wanderer without a nationality. He loved the religious traditions and culture of his own people. He wept over the fact that his own people were suffering from oppression. Many sections of the Old Testament also reflect the patriotism of the people of God. In Psalm 137, the psalmist mourns the captivity of his people in Babylon, and Psalm 126 sings with joy of their liberation and return to Sion. There is no reason why we,



*How good, how delightful it is
for all to live together like
brothers (Ps. 133)*

as Hong Kong Christians, should not also identify ourselves with our nation to rejoice in her triumphs and mourn with her in her suffering.

Throughout Jewish history all the prophets identified themselves closely with the destiny of their people. Moses, Nehemiah and Daniel bravely came forth in times of crisis to lead them. They dedicated themselves to work as catalysts in their people's struggle for unity. In the history of their own people they were witnesses to the saving works of God. They realized that God, man and the world were all intimately related, and that God will not tolerate oppression, bullying, injustice and other crimes against his people. Deuteronomy and the Acts of the Apostles clearly indicate that it is God who gave the earth to all the nations and that He, himself, scattered the peoples and established the boundaries of the nations. Therefore, it is very important for the Hong Kong church to serve as a catalyst for unity and understanding among the Chinese. Are we Christians not always saying that we have to respond to the needs of the times? United by the great task of restoring sovereignty, maintaining our prosperity and furthering the good in our social system, we should have the courage to make the first moves to show our willingness and sincerity in working for the reunification of China. In this context, such activity becomes a necessary expression of Christian love.

It is only natural that some people would worry about the future policy of China towards Hong Kong. However, in recent Sino-British talks, China has promised that for fifty years after 1997 the present social system would remain unchanged, as would the life-style of the people. It follows from this that the religious policy will also remain unchanged. Further assurance of this has come from spokesmen of the China Christian Council and Pastor Xiong Zhenpei (熊真沛) of Canton who have publically expressed on different occasions that there is no need in Hong Kong to carry out the present mainland religious policy of the "Three Selves" (self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting). Also, we shall be allowed to continue our contacts with international religious organizations. I think this reflects a healthy respect for history and for the present reality. It seems to me that we have little cause for unnecessary anxiety or for feeling that we are at a critical crossroads.

In conclusion, then, as children of the kingdom of God and as Chinese citizens, let us with pride and self-confidence, with respect for our country and ourselves, work for our future reunification by continuing to honour our nation and bear witness to the Gospel in Hong Kong.