

AN INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP K. H. TING

ON THE CHURCH IN CHINA AND HONG KONG



by Rev. Ewing W. Carroll, Jr.

- Q. What do you think of the way the question of Hong Kong's future is to be resolved, as worked out between Britain and China?
- A. I think the principle of letting socialism and capitalism exist peacefully side by side within one nation is ingenious. It represents an important departure in that hitherto peaceful co-existence has been a matter between nations only. As Christians and as messengers of reconciliation, we should take a positive attitude towards the approaching end of the artificial division between Hong Kong and the rest of China. We on the mainland will pray and work with hope for a good implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle, knowing that its success will give hope to the peaceful solution of deadlocks elsewhere in the world.
- Q. What is the policy of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement as regards the future of the churches and Christian groups in Hong Kong?
- A. It is not up to us to adopt any policy for churches and Christian groups in Hong Kong because, according to the "one country, two systems" principle, religious group on both sides should not interfere with the life and work of one another. We respect the jurisdiction and integrity of the churches and

Christian groups in Hong Kong and their right to do evangelization, educational, medical and social welfare work in their own system. We hope we may be able to strengthen our bonds of fellowship with Hong Kong Christians so that we can learn from their faith and witness. Membership in the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement, however, is not open to individuals and groups in Hong Kong.

Q. Do Christians on the mainland object to the treatment of mainland China as a mission field for groups in Hong Kong?

A. Yes, very much so. Pre-1949 missionary history in China has amply shown how counter-productive outside-based efforts were for church-building and evangelism. On the other hand, the history of the church in China since 1949 has shown how important self-government, self-support and self-propagation are to church growth. The church is alive and well in China. Under God's care it has grown phenomenally in the last 38 years without outside help. It is more united than ever. It sees the evangelization of the Chinese people on the mainland as its own responsibility, and ministry in China as under its own jurisdiction.

Q. Do you see any place for under-cover missionaries who are Hong Kong Chinese or foreigners?

A. Certainly not. Christian work must be open and above-board, with the full support of Christians within China and enjoy the favor and goodwill of the people in general. We do not want anything resembling religious colonialism in China. We do not see why Christian evangelism should be done in a secretive or underhand way. The China Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement should not be expected to give persons or groups from Hong Kong or elsewhere any protection under the guise of religious freedom. We refrain from exporting a Three-Self Movement to Hong Kong. Why do those persons in Hong Kong, Chinese or foreigners, engaged in "China ministries" wish to impose their wills and ways on us? Missionary work directed at the mainland from groups in Hong Kong would be in violation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration which stipulates that, in matters concerning religion, the two sides are to adhere to the principles of non-subordination, non-interference and mutual respect.

Q. But didn't Jesus ask his disciples to bear witness to him to the ends of the earth?

- A. The "ends of the earth" does not refer to China in particular. Every country and every region is the ends of the earth. Let me remind advocates of "China ministries" that no less than 90% of Hong Kong's population are still outside the churches. Should not these advocates be the most qualified evangelists to reach those souls? Many observers, both in and outside the church, have good reason to wonder why they are so anxious to come to the mainland, since they have no love for socialism and the government they find here.
- Q. How do you visualize the future state of relationships between the churches in Hong Kong and on the mainland?
- A. Relationships will be maintained within the framework of the "one country, two systems" formula, I hope there will be a lot of mutual respect, mutual prayer, mutual learning and mutual exchange. I prefer to see things done openly, honestly and above-board for all to see, so that it is a witness to Christ and not a stumbling block. The result will then be the strengthening of the work God calls each of us to do, with heightened praise and thanksgiving. Secret infiltration, Bible smuggling and the like are harmful to the work and witness of the church in China.

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