

Notice on the Prevention of Some Places Using Religious Activities to Hinder School Education

China State Education Committee

(The following is the Chinese Church Research Center's (CNCR) translation of the main text of the China State Education Committee document on education and religious activities. It is reprinted here with the CNCR's permission.)

...In recent years in a few locations, the phenomenon of religious interfering with and opposing education has occurred frequently. In some specific locales, [the situation] has actually become quite serious. Some examples of this are as follows:

(1) Recruiting believers among students. According to a survey conducted in three individual townships, out of 8,419 secondary and primary students, 871 were believers, which accounted for 19.6 percent of the total school population. Among these student believers, 444 were regular believers, making up 51 percent of the total. Secondary students constituted 26.24 percent of the total number of student believers, while the percentage of primary students was 73.76 percent. The trend toward students becoming believers at a younger age is increasingly obvious.

(2) Propagating religious ideology at school. [It was discovered that] some individual school buildings hang horizontal boards which carry inscriptions with religious overtones, such as "Bethel Science Building" ("Bethel" means the house of God) and "Grace Teaching Building." Some religious personnel publicly warn students not to attend lectures given by teachers who "do not wear hats," "do not wear scarves" and "do not practice Namazi*" (which means not to attend lectures given by teachers who are non-believers). These religious personnel even

*Namazi is the transliteration of the Persian word for "worship" as practiced by Muslims.

forced teachers to change materials which include the saying "labour creates mankind." Due to the interference in education, students in some places read "scriptures" in class, sing "sacred songs" after school, and attend religious meetings in the evening.

(3) Setting up illegal religious schools and enrolling young people in these schools. A few places have been swamped by illegal religious schools which enroll a large number of students under the age of 18 and seriously challenge school education.

(4) Some foreign teachers take advantage of their work to propagate religious ideology and distribute religious propaganda material to the students. In the name of teaching a foreign language, they presumptuously teach religious classics which are outside of the teaching plans and teaching materials.

(5) Overseas religious organizations use [broadcasting] stations to carry out religious propagation and infiltration activities. They also send religious books and journals by post to schools and students.

(6) Certain overseas religious organizations or individuals, without the authorization of our government, provide funds to set up schools which carry religious overtones.

(7) In the name of studying abroad, young people are lured to study in overseas religious institutes. Some young men have already stayed in overseas seminaries.

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Though the above situations occur in only a few places and some [problems] have already been dealt with, the facts indicate that in some locations the interference and opposition of religion against education have affected local schools' teaching programs, academic results and the physical and psychological well-being of the students, as well as the implementation of the

nine-year compulsory education and education policy. Even stability and unity have been affected in some areas, with harmful consequences.

There are various factors which contribute to the influence of religion on teenage students. Though the majority [of these factors] may not have political intentions, [we] should not let religion hinder education. At the same time, [we] should note that hostile forces both inside and outside the country are trying to use religious activities in the realm of political ideology to win successors away from us. [These forces] even provoke incidents and create division, destroying the unity of nationalities and state unity. Therefore, both the government and education administrative departments at all levels should attach great importance to the issue of religion interfering with education and should never lower our guard and let it do as it pleases. In order to prevent the use of religious activities to hinder school education, some suggested measures are as follows:

(1) Upholding the principle of separating religion from education. . . . Our education is socialist education. The basic task of a school is to cultivate constructors and successors of socialism, who have all-round moral, intellectual and physical development. Therefore, [we] should reiterate that no one is allowed to use religion to interfere with school education and social public education, or to use religion to conduct activities which hinder the implementation of compulsory education. Except for those religious schools which have been set up with government approval, no religious activities or subjects are allowed in schools at any level or of any type. Students should not be indoctrinated with religious ideology, which interfere with and obstructs the school in carrying out ideological, moral, scientific and cultural education among students. Students should not be forced or lured to believe in religion. Furthermore, it is forbidden to carry out any activities in schools for the recruitment of believers.

Teaching materials used by schools at or below middle level should not contain anything that propagates religious ideology. Certain subjects at the university level which use texts with religious content should have the materials examined and approved by the education department at provincial level or above.

(2) Schools at all levels and of different types should

strengthen education on the Marxist view of religion and scientific thinking. Atheistic education should be conducted in all relevant teaching subjects so that the students will gradually develop a correct outlook on life and a proper world view. Varied and colorful extra-curricular activities should be developed to enrich students' lives after class [We need to] occupy the after-school positions.

(3) Tightening the examination and approval as well as management of religious schools. Before being set up, all proposed religious schools should be approved by the people's government in accordance with state regulations. Religious schools which have been set up without authorization are illegal and should be banned by the relevant government departments. Government-approved religious schools are not allowed to recruit children of school age who should receive compulsory education, nor should they recruit secondary and primary students who are already studying at another school. Schools which violate these rules will be stopped from operating or be banned, depending on the seriousness of the case. "Language schools" which use religious classics as teaching materials should be handled in accordance with the above regulations set for religious schools.

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(4) Strengthening the education and administration of teachers. Teachers' freedom of religious belief should be respected and protected, but no one is allowed to force teachers to believe in religion, nor should non-believing teachers be discriminated against. Teachers should observe discipline and abide by the law. They should not take advantage of their work to violate the regulations, such as bringing their students to join in religious activities. Foreign teachers are strictly forbidden to propagate religion at school, and this regulation should be stated before-

hand in their employment contracts.

(5) Associations and individuals are strictly forbidden to act as agencies or agents in China on behalf of foreign and international organizations, presumptuously handling such matters as the recruitment of self-supported religious students studying abroad. Any outside organization or individual whose practices violate our country's regulations, and/or presumptuously recruit self-supported religious personnel in China to study overseas, should be banned. Students should not receive funds from foreign missions to study religion in other countries.

(6) Education departments and schools at all levels are not allowed to receive donations from outside religious organizations and individuals who have the intention of infiltration or religious propagation. All donations from religious organizations and individuals to the school have to be examined and approved by the government at provincial level or above, and then be reported to the SEC who will make a record of it. Education departments and schools at all levels are not allowed to receive [donations] without authorization, nor to use [the donations] for propagating religious ideology among the students (including the naming of religious names). The acceptance of outside donations by religious schools should be handled according to relevant rules and regulations.

(7) In ethnic regions where the majority of peoples are believers [we] should start with the local situation and work to stimulate and arouse the enthusiasm of patriotic religious people in mobilizing teenagers and children to enter school and in raising funds for education.

(8) In places where the situation of religion interfering with education is acute, comprehensive administration should be carried out under the united leadership of the government, relying on the strength of society as a whole. Education departments and schools have to seriously implement the party education policy and religious policy, seriously implement the "law on compulsory education," and strengthen work on ideological political education. [We] should provide teenage students with more healthy spiritual food, organize cultural and physical activities, and create favorable conditions for them, so as to protect the healthy development of youngsters.
