

Chapter 10

CHINESE CONGREGATIONALISM

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CHINA IS ONE of the great civilizations in the history of the world. For more than 5,000 years Chinese people have nurtured greatness in the arts, culture, and society. When the peoples of Europe were little more than barbarians, Chinese science and literature thrived in a politically and economically stable environment. It is not surprising, therefore, that from the time of Marco Polo, trade with the Chinese has been eagerly sought by Europeans.

Furthermore, because China is densely populated, during times of drought, floods, and war the Chinese people have emigrated to find a better life. This is especially true of peasants and merchants from the southern coast, where the land is extremely poor. Today Chinese people may be found throughout Southeast Asia.(1)

Trade between Europe and China dates from 1757, when the port of Guangzhou (Canton) was opened for trade. The British and the Portuguese dominated the situation and initially built a lively commerce around opium. When the Chinese government tried to stop the drug traffic, the British became furious at their loss of profits. Soon the so-called Opium War (1839-42) broke out. China, however, was no match for the sea power of the British empire. In defeat, the Chinese were forced to open more trading ports and deed the island of Hong Kong to Britain.

In south China the combination of war, drought, and floods led to famine. The land could not support the people and taxes increased. Soon Chinese contract laborers (coolies) were working in many parts of the world. Although Chinese law prohibited emigration, it became acceptable for young Chinese men to go overseas to work and send money home to their needy families. The abolition of slavery by the British in 1833 had created a great demand for cheap labor.(2)

In 1848, when news came that gold had been discovered in California, the Chinese had still another reason to come to the United States. By 1852 20,000 Chinese had arrived in San Francisco to prospect for gold. American resentment against foreign miners caused the California state legislature to pass a foreign miners tax, making it especially difficult for Mexicans and Chinese to continue prospecting. The Chinese refused to give up. They grouped together for protection, bought up old claims, and worked abandoned tailings. Through team effort they were able to make a living where individual American miners could not. The Chinese also worked in the quicksilver and borax mines. By 1870 one third of the miners in California were Chinese.(3)

As the first wave of Chinese workers spread throughout the American West, British relations with China deteriorated again and the Second Opium War broke out (1856-60). In defeat, China allowed foreigners to recruit Chinese labor and deeded more land to Britain.(4)

At first, Californians welcomed Chinese workers. The Chinese endured difficult conditions to build the railroads.(5) They drained the swamps of the river deltas and enhanced California agriculture.(6) They cooked and did laundry for American men who considered such things “women’s work.”(7) Chinese society in America, however, was never stable. For one thing, it was composed almost entirely of men who wanted to earn their fortune and return home as quickly as possible.(8)

THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION

The American Missionary Association (AMA) had been founded in 1846 by East Coast Congregationalists incensed at the racism of many missionary boards. Before and after the Civil War the AMA functioned as an effective evangelical/abolitionist educational agency for blacks in the South. It also became interested in the needs of American Indians and Chinese and Japanese immigrants.(9)

Work among the Chinese began in 1853, when the Rev. Samuel V. Blakeslee was sent by the AMA to San Francisco. He devised an English phonetic system to teach English to Chinese pupils, but it was not successful. Before long the Presbyterian Chinese Mission, led by William Speer, took over this work with the Chinese.(10)

Fifteen years later, concern for the Chinese surfaced again among Congregationalists. In the fall of 1868 the First Congregational Church of Oakland (founded in 1860) started a Chinese sabbath school. Not long afterward, three men from the school asked to be baptized and became the first Chinese members of a Congregational church on the Pacific Coast (1870). (11) At almost the same time (1869), the AMA renewed its commitment to Chinese mission work and appointed the Rev. John Kimball AMA superintendent.(12)

Typically, the AMA did not organize churches; it founded schools. Also, because the Methodists and others were already at work in San Francisco, the AMA made a conscious effort to serve populations in other parts of the state. In 1871 the AMA started a school in Stockton, followed by other schools in Oakland, Sacramento, Santa Cruz, and Los Angeles. A Chinese convert, Jee Gam, was hired as a missionary worker for the AMA.(13)

San Francisco’s First Congregational Church and Third Congregational Church began sponsoring Chinese Sunday schools. The Third Church school was especially large because of its location near several factories where Chinese worked. Soon AMA superintendent John Kimball approached the Rev. William C. Pond, pastor of Third Congregational Church, and suggested that the church start an evening school. This was the beginning of Pond’s half-century ministry among the Chinese.(14)

WILLIAM C. POND

Pond did not start off optimistic about work with the Chinese:

I had no expectation of immediate results. I had heard for so many years of the very slow progress and the very little fruit in the work in China that I supposed that it would take two or three years before Chinese conservatism could be overcome and conversions reward our labor. My surprise therefore was great when after not more, I am sure, than

three months, our teacher came to me and said that eight of her pupils seemed to have given themselves to Christ, and that they desired to be baptized and received into the church.(15)

Pond decided to meet with the converts to assess their understanding of the gospel. His first interview with a “convert” was disappointing, and the man left to return to China soon thereafter. With the assistance of AMA worker Jee Gam, however, Pond found discussions with the remaining seven encouraging. Yet he was not sure. He asked the head of the Presbyterian mission, who knew Chinese, to determine whether the men were sincere and invite them to join the Presbyterian church, if it was appropriate.

When this was done, the Chinese converts told the Presbyterian missionary: “Your church is nearly three miles away; we were converted in this church, we love our teachers, we would like to be baptized and received here.” With this news, Pond was convinced that “our Saviour was committing these souls to our care, and that we ought not to refuse the responsibility.”(16)

By 1873, however, anti-Chinese sentiment in California was on the increase. Although the Standing Committee of the Third Congregational Church recommended the seven Chinese for membership and the majority of the congregation agreed, a minority group asked that the matter be postponed for two months so that “they could enquire for themselves as to the fitness of these candidates.” According to Pond, they never even tried to meet the men. When the probation was extended six months longer, a major church quarrel ensued. In the fray, support for the Chinese increased and Pond noted that there was “such an uprising of public sentiment against those who would forbid men of a particular race, as such, to be at home in a church of Christ, that at the end of six months, the church had become far more anxious to receive them than they were to be received.” Pond, however, was disgusted. He determined to “withdraw from the battle-field” and submitted his resignation. But he refused to depart until he could baptize the Chinese converts and receive them into the membership of Third Church.(17)

The Chinese wanted Pond to be their pastor. They were not alone. On February 23, 1873, about thirty leaders left Third Church and started a new Sunday school and church about a mile and a quarter from their old congregation. They asked Pond to be their pastor. Although Pond had already committed himself to raise money for Pacific Theological Seminary and could not assume pastoral duties for a year, he consented. At his suggestion they named the new venture Bethany Congregational Church.(18)

During the ensuing year Pond worried about the Chinese. On a trip to New York he called at the AMA offices and learned that the association leadership wanted Pond to be superintendent of Chinese work in California. Pond was reluctant to usurp Kimball’s role. But before Pond left New York, Kimball resigned and Pond was commissioned to work for the AMA. He returned to California and Bethany Congregational Church to develop plans for a permanent AMA headquarters in San Francisco’s Chinatown.(19) In accepting the commission, Pond wrote:

I received the commission with accompanying instruction. I enter on the work with much good cheer. The idea is this: to form the Chinese who seem to have become Christians in any locality a class duly organized. It remains to be seen whether we can carry this idea out: but something of this sort, I believe would be useful. Give us your prayer.(20)

Pond's work among California Chinese is impressive. Although he did not anticipate that he would be asked to raise money, as needs increased and money from New York was exhausted, he took it upon himself to raise needed funds locally. He visited schools and over the years was involved in forty-nine missions to Chinese.

Not even one-half of these became permanent. We never had at one time more than twenty-three missions. But those that were planted and lived only a year or two, were not fruitless. Of but one do I think as a failure. One was discontinued because the mob drove all the Chinese from the town; some because the business which gathered Chinese in that locality was discontinued; some because through lack of funds we were compelled to let them die in order that those with brighter prospects might continue. It is impossible for us to know how many souls were led out of darkness into light.(21)

ANTI-CHINESE SENTIMENT

From the late 1850s through the mid-1870s Chinese immigration steadily increased, reaching an all-time high of 60,000 between 1871 and 1875.(22) From the beginning, Americans debated the question of Chinese immigration. Most Americans expected the Chinese to go back to China when the railroads were built and the swamplands reclaimed. But conditions in China kept them coming. Soon American workers found competition with Chinese labor bitter, and they organized against the "Yellow Peril" and the "Chinese Menace." In 1873 the San Francisco Chronicle asked: "Who have built a filthy nest of iniquity and rottenness in our midst? The Chinese. Who filled our workshops to the exclusion of white labor? The Chinese. Who drives away white labor by their stealthy but successful competition? The Chinese."(23) In the 1870s and 1880s San Francisco passed city ordinances prohibiting people to use poles for carrying merchandise on the sidewalks, requiring prisoners in city jails to get hair cuts if their hair was more than one inch long, and demanding high license fees for transporting laundry without using wagons drawn by horses. These blatant anti-Chinese laws were challenged in the courts and eventually declared unconstitutional, but not before they made life miserable for the Chinese.(24)

Although many Protestant clergy supported Chinese immigration, some did so with qualifications. While calling for evangelistic work, they argued that Chinese immigration was dangerous to America. Conversion was the only solution, but because success was improbable, even people like Blakeslee, the first AMA agent in San Francisco, initially argued for immigration restrictions.(25) In 1877 the General Association of Congregational Churches of California called for modification of the 1868 Burlingame Treaty, advocating open immigration, to provide for some restrictions. It wanted to stop the influx of prostitutes and ease the pressure on American and Christian institutions.

Back East, however, Congregational purists like Lyman Abbott rejected all restrictions. He asked, "By what right do the children of the immigrants of 1620 say to the immigrants of 1880, 'You shall not set foot upon this soil?' By what right do the sons of the Pilgrim Fathers say to the pilgrims of this generation, 'You shall keep off?'"(26) At the thirty-third annual meeting of the AMA, in 1879, the Chinese Missions committee reported:

We would utter, therefore, our solemn protest as an Association against the discriminating legislation of State or nation, and the insults and wrongs of individuals, by which the lives of the Chinese among us have been vexed and the name of the Christian

religion has been dishonored. And we would urge this Association to lead the van in arousing public sentiment against the wrongs already inflicted as now threatened, and to prosecute its work of evangelization among them, until the Chinese shall be as undisturbed in America as immigrants from other lands. The cry that the Chinamen must go is unworthy of our nation and our religion.(27)

Eventually nativist pressures on Congress led to the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1882. It stopped the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years, permitting only teachers, students, merchants, and tourists to enter the United States. It also prevented the Chinese from becoming naturalized American citizens. This was the first immigration law in U.S. history to single out a specific ethnic group.(26)

As anti-Chinese sentiment increased through the 1880s the Scott Act was passed in 1888, preventing any Chinese worker who left the country to visit family in China from returning to America. In 1892, when the ten-year Exclusion Act was up, labor pressures on Congress resulted in the passage of the Geary Act. The act not only continued prohibitions on Chinese immigration, but also required all Chinese in America to register and to carry a “photo passport” that could be shown to authorities on demand. Laws in 1894, 1902, 1904, and 1924 further tightened exclusion policies by preventing Chinese laborers from coming into the United States unless they were sponsored by family members already in the country. Women who were not the wives of merchants, teachers, and students were barred. Because the Chinese could not bring their wives from China, or marry American women, second-generation Chinese communities remained small.(29)

FROM MISSIONS TO CHURCHES

Although the AMA pioneered in using English instruction as a means of evangelizing the Chinese in America, by 1892 there were at least 271 schools or missions sponsored by numerous denominations. An 1876 Congregational report argued: “For bringing the Chinese within our reach, no other plan compares with this of proffering to them instruction in the English language. These thus attracted are, in general, and by a process of natural selection, the choice spirits, most eager for knowledge, and thus most open to impression.”(30) Congregationalists often said that they were “baiting the Gospel hook with the English alphabet.”(31)

By 1875 California Congregationalists moved to set up a local organization to coordinate the work of the AMA and independent Chinese Sunday schools. The new society, named the California Chinese Mission (CCM), came into being on March 9, 1876, with William C. Pond as secretary. Headquarters were established at 5 Brenham Place, in the heart of San Francisco’s Chinatown. From that time on AMA activity in California was carried out through the CCM.(32)

In its first annual report the CCM boasted that it had 1,500 students enrolled in thirteen mission schools throughout California. There were three schools in San Francisco and ten more schools, one each, in Antioch, Eureka, Los Angeles, Oakland, Oroville, Petaluma, Sacramento, San Leandro, Santa Barbara, and Stockton. Later schools were founded in Marysville, Suisun, Visalia, Woodland, Tucson, San Diego, Fresno, Ventura, Pasadena, Riverside, Santa Cruz, Berkeley, and Bakersfield.(33)

Congregational missions never required their teachers to learn Chinese because, argued Pond, the object of the schools was not to train the intellect, but to save the soul. The Chinese were eager to learn English and even risked becoming Christian. The CCM relied on Chinese helpers and “close hand-to-hand teaching,” making less use of books and tracts than did other missions. Even if the missionaries could speak Chinese, Congregationalists believed that it was better to let recent Chinese converts speak from their own experience.(34)

For the Chinese it was not always easy. Lee San Hong, a Chinese mission worker in San Diego, recalled how his friends ridiculed him when he became a Christian. “The Chinese made fun of me, calling me a Jesus Boy. After I was baptized by immersion they asked me if the water was wet. I thought my father in China would not like it, so I did not tell him for a long time. When they [in China] saw my photograph with my queue off they called me a monk.”(35)

Besides educating the Chinese and defending them against unjust laws, some of the most dramatic missionary work was on behalf of Chinese women. As pointed out earlier, American Chinese society was dominated by men. Although more than 8,000 women had come to the United States before the Exclusion Act, by 1890 there were only 3,868 Chinese women left in the country, as compared with 102,620 men. Missionaries were especially concerned about Chinese prostitution, encouraging church women to raise money to support programs to rescue young girls. They believed that there was little hope of redeeming the Chinese until the women were converted.(36)

Congregational women, unlike other Protestant groups, did not establish any organized work with Chinese prostitutes. In the late 1880s a single woman, Minnie C. Worley, told Pond that she felt called to work with the Chinese in San Francisco. She said that she was concerned about married women. “The poor slaves in the brothels are encouraged to escape and when they escape are housed and protected and taught and led to Christ in the Presbyterian and Methodist homes, but the wives living in womanly wedlock, have next to no care.” Soon the Congregationalists hired a woman worker to do visitation among Chinese mothers and children. This visitor offered aid, sang gospel songs, told Bible stories, taught reading, and advised Chinese women on family problems. Yet the number of female converts remained few. In 1887 William Pond reported that he baptized his second Chinese woman. This was a small proportion of the 120 persons he had baptized to that date. Evangelism among Chinese women continued to be hindered by Chinese customs that prevented women from going out to church on their own.(37) From the late 1880s, nativist harassment and declining Chinese population made missionary efforts more difficult. In the face of growing discrimination, Chinese laborers wondered whether it was worth the effort to learn English. Fewer students enrolled in the mission schools. The Congregationalists in 1887 reported that they needed to go out into the streets and lanes and “compel them to come in.” They began promoting churches, visitation, and street preaching. But street preaching went against the Confucian traditions of schoolroom teaching. Chinese Christian leaders who at first were reluctant eventually were convinced. In 1895 Loo Quong, a Congregational leader in Fresno, argued that street preaching was the most important part of missionary work.(38)

Congregationalists also developed a new philosophy about church growth. At first, Congregationalists encouraged Chinese converts to join the American church to which their mission school was attached. New Christians needed to be under the watch and care of those who were maturer. Yet most Chinese church members had no real part in the work of the American churches in which they were members, and the churches cultivated no genuine understanding of the Chinese. Pond began to promote the idea of a “branch church.”

The branch of a tree is itself a tree, with trunk and bark and branches and leaves and flowers and fruit like any other tree-but it is rooted not directly in the soil but in the trunk of the mother tree. It is in vital connection with that mother tree, receives sustenance from it and is in an important sense, ordered in its growth by it.(39)

Pond used the branch concept as a way of encouraging the development of separate churches and the maintenance of ties between American churches and their Chinese members or missions. Not until 1911 did the Congregationalists state that it was their policy to develop each mission as rapidly as possible into a self-supporting church. Other Protestant denominations tended to start separate Chinese churches with no ties to American congregations from the very beginning.(40)

In 1900 a Berkeley record book listed fourteen missions: two in San Francisco and one each in Los Angeles, Fresno, Marysville, Riverside, Pasadena, San Diego, Ventura, Berkeley, Oakland, Sacramento, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz.(41) The Los Angeles mission was taken over by the Presbyterians and the Santa Barbara mission involved cooperation with the Methodists and the Presbyterians.(42) A survey conducted by the Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions in 1921 reported that the Congregationalists had nine Chinese missions.(43)

As the years went by, many of the schools folded, populations shifted, and missionary zeal faded. In the end only three of the missions sponsored by the CCM developed into freestanding churches that still relate to the Congregational tradition through the United Church of Christ: the Chinese Congregational Church of San Francisco, the Chinese Community Church of San Diego, and the Chinese Community Church of Berkeley.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CHINESE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (UCC)

The San Francisco Chinese Congregational Church marks its beginning from 1873, when Pond and seventeen friends left Third Congregational Church to found Bethany Congregational Church. When Pond became AMA superintendent for Chinese work in California, he leased a building near Portsmouth Square and saw to it that English classes for Chinese were offered at night. The number of people attending these classes steadily increased.

By 1902 the program had expanded and money was sought from the East to purchase a building at 21 Brenham Place, in San Francisco's Chinatown. The upstairs became residential apartments and the first floor was reserved for church services and English classes. In 1904 the Rev. Gum Gee was called to serve as pastor to the Chinese congregation, and 199 Chinese members of Bethany Congregational Church were transferred to the Chinese church roll. It was found that many of these were no longer active, so that the Chinese church ended up with about 96 members.(44)

When the San Francisco earthquake and fire struck on April 18, 1906, the church building was destroyed. A longtime church member who as a child had lived on the fourth floor described the scene:

Our Church withstood the impack [sic] of the first quake, but the doors and windows could not be opened. Portsmouth Square was filled with people, some in their night clothes. The children of our building were herded to the park for fear that the building might crumble. My parents returned to the Church to clean up, but another quake brought

them hurrying down again. . . Soon a fire broke out.... People began to run back to their homes to gather what they could of their belongings, and the migration commenced. ... Our Church group kept together and together we walked all the way towards the west to the West School. ... My father clutched tightly in his hand the small suit-case which contained the most valuable and treasured things-the records of our Church.(45)

A partially damaged school building that was adjacent to the old church was used by the Chinese congregation until a new building could be constructed. Again Pond helped the church get financial help from Eastern sources. When that money was combined with local funds, the church had \$30,000 to erect a new building at 21 Brenham Place. It was not until 1921, however, that the Chinese church became an independent organization, with the provision that the building could not be sold for commercial purposes. From that date on, the finances, ministry, and associated activities were handled by the officers of the church.

Although many ministers have served the Chinese Congregational Church over its 100 years, one pastor is especially important. From 1913 to 1920 the Rev. B. Y. Leong worked at the church as an assistant and was ordained. In 1920 he left San Francisco to serve churches in Bakersfield and Chicago. After a few years he returned to the San Francisco church to be its pastor (1927-53). His total length of service to the church remains unequaled (thirty-three years).

As California Congregationalists became part of the United Church of Christ in the 1960s, the Chinese Congregational Church joined the UCC. In 1965-66 its building was renovated, and in 1971 the church was able to “burn its mortgage.” It continues to serve the Chinese community in San Francisco.(46)

THE SAN DIEGO CHINESE COMMUNITY CHURCH (UCC)

In June 1885 William C. Pond noted that two Christian Chinese had moved to San Diego. Soon thereafter the CCM started a Chinese Mission School at the First Presbyterian Church in that city. Late the next year the San Diego Union ran a short announcement that twenty students were enrolled in classes.

They learn reading and writing and are taught religious precepts from the Bible in their own language. . . Several “boys” have recently “graduated” and gone back to the Flowery Kingdom, to disseminate the Gospel among their benighted countrymen, providing they themselves don’t back-slide.(47)

During the early years the mission moved several times, seeking to be closer to the Chinese community and to have more space to provide sleeping rooms for the “Christianized Chinese.” It was believed that association with unconverted friends was “not conducive to morality and steadfastness in the faith.” One of the early Chinese mission workers described the difficulties faced by new converts: “We Chinese Christians are very much hated by our relatives, they say that the Christians are a people of no use—ungrateful, because we do not worship ancestors. It is common thing in China that Christians are severely beaten by parents for accepting the Christian doctrine.(48)

Several teachers served the mission during the early years. In 1903 excessive harassment of

Chinese under the Oriental Exclusion Act made life extremely difficult for all Chinese in San Diego. (Because the city was situated on the Mexican border, it was used by the Chinese for illegal entry from Mexico.) During his annual visit in 1905, Pond found the mission “near death.” The situation was aggravated because four Protestant mission stations were competing for the attention of the 400 Chinese persons living in the area. The Congregational mission was the oldest and best situated; therefore, it survived.

In 1911, when the fifty-year charter of the CCM ended, the local Congregational Association took over supervision of the mission. An Oriental Committee comprising representatives from all Congregational churches in San Diego County supervised the work. In 1925 the mission called its first minister, the Rev. C. C. Hung, and in 1927 dedicated a new brick structure containing sixteen dormitory rooms at 645 First Avenue. It was not until 1946 that the mission became a self-sustaining Chinese Congregational Church with its own constitution. In 1950 the church changed its name to the Chinese Community Church, to reflect its mission to the community. Finally, in 1960, the church sold its First Avenue property and began construction of a facility at 1750 47th Street.

Over the years the church sponsored youth organizations and special programs to keep second-generation Chinese in touch with their cultural roots. During World War II the laws against the Chinese were repealed, and the Chinese were allowed to enter the United States on a quota basis. As the number of Chinese living in the United States increased, the church began to divide philosophically, theologically, and culturally. In 1978 the pastor resigned and with about half the members left the church to found a more conservative Chinese Evangelical Church. The remaining members regrouped, called a new pastor, and rebuilt the congregation as part of the United Church of Christ. In 1985 the church celebrated its centennial.(49)

THE BERKELEY CHINESE COMMUNITY CHURCH (UCC)

The beginnings of the Berkeley Congregational Chinese Mission go back to the early 1890s, when the Women’s Missionary Society of the First Congregational Church of Berkeley raised concerns about Chinese mission work in the area.(50) By 1900 a Sunday school for Chinese students opened in the basement of the First Congregational Church. A year or so later it officially came under the supervision of the CCM and moved to a “cottage” on Shattuck Avenue that provided living quarters and various meeting rooms. The mission was especially dedicated to serve the needs of students from China who were studying at the University of California.

About 1905 the lot on Shattuck Avenue was sold. The building, however, was moved to a new location (1917 Addison Street) and raised up for a second floor. The new first floor had a large meeting room with kitchen, dining room, and bath at the back of the building. English classes and Christian education programs flourished. So much so, in fact, that by 1909, a decision was made to organize a branch church. Because several of the mission teachers came from the North Berkeley Congregational Church, the Chinese asked the North Berkeley Church to be its “mother church.” They reflected, “We were not in a position to organize an independent church.” However, they appreciated the fact that a church ought to “supply the educational, social, as well as the spiritual need of its members.” They hoped that with the blessing of God the branch church would become independent.(51)

In May 1910 the branch church was organized. The Mission House, as it was called, held Sunday

services, launched a Christian education program, and started a Chinese Literary Club. The Literary Club helped older members learn Chinese and held programs on social reforms, such as queue-cutting, the American system of marriage, and the eating of Chinese food at the table with individual bowls and chopsticks. In 1912, when the Manchu government was overthrown and the Republic of China established, the church went through turmoil as some members returned to China or worried about relatives back home. Shortly thereafter new leadership embarked on a program to make the church independent of the mother church. This goal was realized on December 15, 1914, when the Berkeley Chinese Congregational church became a self-sustaining independent congregation.

In the years that followed the church flourished, becoming the center of social and cultural life for Chinese residents of Berkeley and for Chinese students at the university. When families with children were drawn into the church, a Chinese language school was started. Ironically this mission, which started out to teach English to Chinese students, soon found itself called to teach Chinese to second-generation Chinese-Americans.

By 1940 more space was needed. Although plans were formulated to build a modern building, changes in pastoral leadership and wartime obligations kept things at the planning stage for another decade. Property finally was purchased at 2117 Acton Street, and in 1955 a new building was dedicated. The Berkeley Chinese Community Church continued to grow, adding a parsonage and a Christian education building, and became an important force in the development of the United Church of Christ.(52)

MISSION AND OUTREACH

The story of Chinese Congregationalism is not simply the story of mission schools evolving into churches. From the beginning, concerns about Chinese immigrants were linked to the evangelization of China. Pond and other missionaries viewed the conversion of the Chinese in the United States as the first step in bringing all of China to Christianity. As early as 1878 Pond expressed the need for a mission in Hong Kong that would be closely related to his work in California. This mission could meet returning converts, assist them in relocation, and keep track of them. Many Chinese converts agreed with Pond. In 1880 the CCM recommended that a mission be established in China to connect its foreign and home work. (53)

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had some history in south China. However, its mission in Canton, the oldest of the board, was suspended in 1866. Twenty years later the board responded to the argument that the churches needed to keep in touch with converts returning to their native land. C. R. Hager, experienced with the Chinese in San Francisco, was sent to Hong Kong in 1883. He itinerated from that city and established outstations on the mainland. (54)

Back in San Francisco, Chinese Christians also became more concerned about China. In 1886, when a Mr. G. L. Fong delivered a series of lectures on the hard times in China, the need for missionaries to build churches to help the people, and the duty of the Chinese people in the United States to assist their homeland, a Chinese Congregational Missionary Society was started. The idea spread to other Chinese missions and all contributions were sent to the San Francisco church. In 1887 the missionary society supported the efforts of the Rev. Chui Get to lead worship and start a library of Chinese and English books in Canton. In the years that followed,

contributions from the Chinese Congregational Missionary Society helped to start new churches in Sun Ning (1889), Hoy Ping (1901), Yun Ping (1901), and Sun Woy (1904). (55)

The Chinese-Americans also took responsibility for mission and outreach in California. Methodists and Presbyterians had special programs to rescue young girls from prostitution. The Baptists supported a home for boys. In San Francisco the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians started Hip Wo School. Beginning in 1924 the school grew into a quality secondary school for second- and third-generation Chinese young people. It was argued that the purpose of the school was “to introduce Chinese culture to the Americanized Chinese students, to develop a Christ-like spirit in the students, most of whom come from Godless homes.”(56)

One final word about Chinese mission work needs to be added. Although the (German) Reformed Church in the United States did not have any direct work with Chinese immigrants, it was not unaffected by mounting Christian concerns for China. In 1895 William Hoy, a Reformed missionary home on furlough from work in Japan, was challenged to think about launching a mission to China. Four years later Hoy left his friends in Sendai, Japan, and established a new Reformed China Mission at Yochow City, Hunan. His careful report of that work shows another way in which the efforts of those denominations that shaped the United Church of Christ have longstanding commitments to the well-being of the Chinese people.(57)

HAWAII

Although much has been written about the development of Congregationalism in Hawaii, we cannot complete this story of Chinese Congregationalism without a brief description of what happened in Hawaii. The history is different, but the concerns are the same. (58)

The history of Chinese Christians in Hawaii begins with the work of Lutheran missionaries from the Basel, Berlin, and Rhenish missionary societies in south China. These Lutheran societies worked with the Hakkas, a nomadic group that settled north of Guangzhou many generations earlier. Perhaps because the Hakkas spoke a different dialect and were considered “outsiders” to the “Cantonese,” they were especially receptive to the Christian message. Furthermore, in the 1850s and 1860s, when Hawaiian sugar plantations started recruiting Chinese labor, the Hakka people emigrated in large numbers.

It was not long before the Hawaiian Evangelical Association (the continuing Congregational mission organization) found a young man named S. P Aheong to work with the Chinese. Aheong came to Hawaii as a Chinese laborer and married a Hawaiian. He spoke many Chinese dialects and learned English quickly. Although many of the Hakka Chinese immigrants were already Christian, in 1868 Aheong was appointed to “Christianize the 1500 Chinese then in Hawaii.”

At about the same time, the Bethel Church (a chapel for seamen) in Honolulu also reached out to the Chinese. Its minister, the Rev. Samuel C. Damon, set up a Sunday school for Chinese and began providing English instruction. By 1870 the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) purchased Chinese Bibles and organized programs. A Chinese YMCA, later known as the Chinese Christian Association, was organized in 1877. Chinese-language services at Bethel Church served a growing community until, in 1879, a group of young Chinese converts petitioned the Hawaiian Evangelical Association to organize a Chinese church. They purchased a lot on Fort Street and obtained a charter from King Kalakaua. The Fort Street Chinese Church was dedicated in 1881.

For forty-five years the church, supported by mission funds, served the Chinese community of Honolulu. After becoming self-supporting in 1919, the church decided to move to a more suburban area to follow the Chinese population. In 1926 a site was chosen at 1054 South King Street and a building was erected. The church renamed itself the First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawaii. In 1979 it celebrated its centennial.(59)

During the early years the Fort Street Church served Hakka Chinese, many of whom were converted to Christianity by German missionaries before coming to the islands. By the end of the century, however, most Chinese entering Hawaii spoke the more common Cantonese or Pundi dialect. Furthermore, many of them had no knowledge of Christianity. It was time to organize a church to serve their needs.(60)

A small mission was begun in 1906 by Elijah and Jessie MacKenzie. It attracted older Cantonese-speaking Chinese and many young people. By 1915 the “Chinese Second Congregational Church,” or, in Chinese, the “Yee Jee Wui,” was organized. Because the church erected a building at 74 North Beretania Street, it was also known as the Beretania Mission or the Beretania Church of Christ.(61)

The congregation was made up of persons from the mission school, a group from the old Fort Street Chinese Church, and students from nearby Mills School, later known as the Mid-Pacific Institute. By the late 1920s the Beretania Church was Honolulu’s largest Chinese church. Its youth programs were especially strong.

Before long, however, conflicts arose between the young members of the church and a non-English-speaking pastor who was called to the church in 1928. Finally, in 1934, twenty members of the Beretania Church Young People’s Board withdrew from the parent church to establish a new English-speaking church. Although the Beretania Church suffered a setback, it eventually initiated bilingual services and responded to more progressive leadership after 1938. In 1948 the church relocated, constructing a building on Judd Street near Liliha and changing its name to the United Church of Christ. During 1975 and 1985 the church celebrated its sixtieth and seventieth anniversaries with great vigor and enthusiasm.

A third congregation serving the Chinese community in Honolulu got its start from those young people who left the Beretania Church in 1934. At first, because they met in an old building on Keeaumoku Street, the church was known as the Keeaumoku Church of Christ. It held services in English and voted to allow membership without requiring baptism. Steady attendance and earnestness in embracing the new faith were considered more important than the rite of baptism in determining membership. This was important to many parents who were afraid to risk having their children show disrespect and ignorance of the deities that were part of Chinese culture.

In 1938 the young church changed its name to The Community Church of Honolulu. Its new church creed read in part:

We purport to be democratically Christian, believing that the democratic process is the most educative in the development of the personality. . We purport to be a community church in fact-a community church is supra-racial and supra-national, open to all, regardless of race, class or caste, and seeks to render a real service to the community in the light of its needs. (62)

By 1944 the young church became self-supporting, and in 1949 it was formally incorporated. During 1984 it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

In the late nineteenth century Chinese workers settled on all the Hawaiian islands. Francis W. Damon was chosen to be superintendent of Chinese work for the Hawaiian Evangelical Association in 1882. Before long, Chinese schools and churches existed on Maui (Kula, Wailuku, and Paia), Kauai (Waimea, Hanapepe, and Hanalei), and Hawaii (Hilo, Kau, and Kohala). The new immigrants were receptive to Christianity, often bringing their own ministers and Christian traditions from the Lutheran missions. They also brought their wives and children with them.(63) But the Chinese for the most part did not stay on the plantation. They gradually moved to the city, and so 100 years later only one UCC church, which started as a Chinese church, is still in existence on the outer islands. It is in Hilo, until recent years the second largest city in Hawaii. The Hilo Chinese Christian Church, in 1956, changed its name to The United Community Church in order to express its openness to persons other than Chinese.(64)

CHINESE CHURCHES AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The situation of Chinese-Americans has dramatically changed during the latter half of the twentieth century. While the old Chinese communities in major cities have matured, new waves of immigrants have arrived from Taiwan and the cities of Southeast Asia. New Chinese UCC churches founded in the 1970s carry labels like the Formosan United Church of Christ (Seattle, 1977), Chinese Community Church (Detroit, 1977), and Brookline Chinese Christian Church (Boston area, 1979).(65)

In the early 1970s church leaders from Chinese, Japanese, and Pacific Island churches began to discover common concerns in the life of the United Church of Christ. The Pacific and Asian American Ministries of the United Church of Christ (PAAM) was formed in 1974 to give expression to the growing pluralism of the UCC. Members from the historic Chinese Congregational churches have joined with representatives from the younger Chinese UCC churches and other UCC churches that have large Asian or Pacific islander memberships for fellowship and to influence the wider church.

Finally, Chinese UCC churches developed deep ecumenical loyalties. In San Francisco the Chinese Congregational Church (UCC) works closely with the Chinese Christian Union of San Francisco. This organization, which celebrated its sixty-fifth anniversary in 1981, brings together eight Chinese church bodies in the city of San Francisco: Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Christian Reformed, Church of the Nazarene, Episcopal, Salvation Army, and Congregational (UCC).(66) In Honolulu four Chinese churches are affiliated with the Chinese Christian Association (two Episcopal and two UCC).(67) Every three years most of the Chinese UCC churches participate in CONFAB, an ecumenical gathering of the National Conference of Chinese Churches in America.

The Chinese churches have tried to affirm their identity as Chinese and to preserve the values that come from their history and culture. At the same time they have been full participants in the life of the denomination. In so doing they have brought richness to the whole United Church of Christ. Rooted in their Congregational and United Church heritage, they live out the ecumenical spirit of the gospel. The Chinese Congregational story is a sign that it is possible to be particular and universal, denominational and ecumenical.

Notes

1. Ruthanne Lum McCunn, *An Illustrated History of the Chinese in America* (San Francisco: Design Enterprises, 1979), pp. 12-15. This popular history has a good survey of general information about the Chinese in America. Other useful surveys are Jack Chen, *The Chinese of America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); Stanford Lyman, *Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 1974); William L. Tung, *The Chinese in America: 1820-1973* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1974). I have also relied heavily on a doctoral dissertation by Wesley S. Woo, "Protestant Work Among the Chinese in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850-1920," Graduate Theological Union, 1983.
2. McCunn, op. cit., pp. 16-18
3. Ibid., pp. 24-28.
4. Ibid., p. 17.
5. Ibid., pp. 31-35, and Woo, op. cit., pp. 22-24.
6. McCunn, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
7. Ibid., pp. 63-65.
8. Woo, op. cit., pp. 28-29.
9. Ibid., p. 66. Descriptions of the American Missionary Association are found in many places. In *Hidden Histories in the United Church of Christ* (United Church Press, 1984) there is a chapter on "Blacks and the American Missionary Association," 1:81-94. See also the *History of the American Missionary Association: Its Churches and Educational Institutions Among the Freedmen, Indians, and Chinese* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1874).
10. Woo, op. cit., p. 67.
11. *A Century Closes, the Church Continues: A Brief History of the First Congregational Church of Oakland, California, 1860-1960*, a centennial booklet (published by the church, 1960), p. 4.
12. Charles M. Bufford, "A Hundred Years of Congregationalism in San Francisco: 1849-1949" (a typewritten manuscript prepared for the Centennial Meeting of First Congregational Church, San Francisco, 1949), pp. 10-12; and Woo, op. cit., p. 68.
13. William C. Pond, *Gospel Pioneering: Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in California 1833-1920* (Oberlin, OH: The News Printing Company, 1921), p. 131; also quoted in Woo, op. cit., p. 68.
14. Pond, op. cit.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 132.
17. Ibid., p. 133.
18. Ibid., p. 135.
19. Ibid., pp. 138-39.
20. Acknowledgment letter by William C. Pond to the AMA accepting his appointment as

- CCM superintendent. Quoted in *One Hundred Years of Leadership and Service*, a Centennial Booklet of the San Diego Chinese Community Church (UCC) 1885-1985 (published by the church, 1985), p. 9,
21. Pond, op. cit., p. 143.
 22. McCunn, op. cit., p. 71.
 23. Ibid., p. 75.
 24. Ibid., p. 77.
 25. Woo, op. cit., pp. 143-44.
 26. Lyman Abbott, "The Two Methods," *American Missionary* 24 (November 1880):373. Quoted in Woo, op. cit., p. 148.
 27. *The Thirty-third Annual Report of the American Missionary Association and the Proceedings at the Annual Meeting Held at Chicago, Illinois, October 28-30, 1879* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1879), p. 16.
 28. McCunn, op. cit., p. 84.
 29. Ibid., pp. 87-88.
 30. *California Chinese Mission Annual Report, 1876*, p. 9. Quoted in Woo, op. cit., p. 118.
 31. Joseph Cook, *The Three Despised Races in the United States; or the Chinaman, the Indian, and the Freedman* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1878), p. 10. Quoted in Woo, op. cit., p. 118.
 32. Woo, op. cit., p. 71.
 33. Ibid., pp. 71-73.
 34. Ibid., p. 72.
 35. From the *San Diego Union*, March 23, 1899. Quoted in the centennial booklet of the San Diego Chinese Community Church, p. 12.
 36. Woo, op. cit., pp. 154-62.
 37. Ibid., p. 162.
 38. Ibid., p. 170.
 39. Ibid., p. 172.
 40. Ibid., p. 173.
 41. This list appears in a record book of the Berkeley Chinese Community Church dated February 19, 1900.
 42. George W. Haskell, "The Southern California Story of Congregationalism." (Typewritten manuscript prepared for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Congregational Conference of Southern California and the Southwest and the inaugural meeting of the United Church of Christ of Southern California, 1962), pp. 79-83. It is my understanding that the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara churches continue to exist outside the UCC.

43. From the *Directory of Oriental Missions*, ca. 1921, pp. 1, 14, 16. Quoted in Woo, op. cit., p. 104.
44. B. Y. Leong, "History of the Chinese Congregational Church," printed in the *80th Anniversary Booklet of The Chinese Congregational Church, San Francisco: 1873-1953* (published by the church, 1953), pp. 3-4. The number of members that were removed from the Bethany Church roll is cited in Bufford, op. cit., p. 12.
45. Florence Chinn Kwan, "Me and My Church: A Short Sketch," printed in the *80th Anniversary Booklet*, p. 10.
46. *The Chinese Congregational Church, San Francisco, 100th Anniversary 1873-1973* (published by the church, 1973), p. 5.
47. *The San Diego Union*, December 27, 1886. Reprinted in the centennial booklet of the San Diego Chinese Community Church, p. 10.
48. From an address of Chin Toy in San Diego, the fifth anniversary of the Congregational Chinese Mission of that city, February 9, 1890. Quoted in the centennial booklet of the *San Diego Chinese Community Church*, p. 11.
49. A complete history of the church, written by David Seid, Dorothy Horn, and Karl Fung, is found in the centennial booklet of the *San Diego Chinese Community Church*, pp. 6-28.
50. Handwritten minutes of the Women's Missionary Society of the First Congregational Church of Berkeley, 1894 and 1898.
51. Y. T. Dang, "My Life Work in Connection with the History of the Congregational Chinese Church of Berkeley, California." Typewritten manuscript in the possession of the author, dated 1954, p. 3.
52. "Berkeley Chinese Community Church, United Church of Christ." Typewritten statement prepared for the 125th anniversary of the Northern California Conference, United Church of Christ, 1983, 3 pp.
53. William C. Pond, *American Missionary* 32 (September and October 1878):281, 312. Quoted in Woo, op. cit., p. 114.
54. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1929), p. 365.
55. Leong, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
57. William Edwin Hay, *History of the China Mission of the Reformed Church in the United States* (Philadelphia: Board of Foreign Missions, 1914),
58. A fine treatment of the Chinese in Hawaii is Margaret C. Young, *And They Also Came* (Honolulu: United Church of Christ, 1976).
59. A brief history of *The First Chinese United Church of Christ in Hawaii* is found in its centennial booklet (published by the church, 1979), pp. 7-13. A longer version, originally written by Mrs. Ah Jook Ku, appeared in the ninetieth anniversary booklet (published by the church, 1969), pp. 7-23,

60. Young, op. cit., p. 12.
61. *The United Church of Christ, Honolulu 60th and 70th anniversary booklets (1975 and 1965)*. Although they do not contain much early history of the church, they are excellent chronicles of recent history. The best history of the Beretania Church and the new church is in the *50th Anniversary Booklet of the Community Church of Honolulu: 1934-1984* (published by the church, 1984). See p. 5.
62. *50th Anniversary of the Community Church of Honolulu*, p. 5.
63. Young, op. cit., pp. 16-30.
64. A typewritten history of the Hilo Chinese Christian Church is available from the Hawaii UCC Conference (n.d.),
65. *United Church of Christ Yearbook, 1986*.
66. An anniversary booklet of the *Chinese Christian Union of San Francisco: 1916-1981* was published in 1981.
67. *Centennial Yearbook of the Chinese Christian Association of Hawaii: 1877-1977* (Honolulu, 1977).