

# The Origins of the Independent and Ecumenical Movements in Modern China: The Church in Southern Fujian

■ Keung Ka Wing

Ng Wah Catholic Secondary School

This is a study of the development of the Three-Self and Ecumenical Movements within Presbyterian churches in southern Fujian during the late Qing period. It is an overlooked area of research, and this study seeks to clarify how these two movements emerged and became transformed within those particular churches.

Several essential findings have been presented here, and can be summarized as follows:

First, though we know that the Three-Self Movement should include “Self-government”, “Self-support”, and “Self-propagation”, it was the financial dimension that became the dominant consideration affecting the development of the Three-Self Movement in the experience of Presbyterian churches in southern Fujian. In order to deal with their financial difficulties, some churches preferred to join together in order to amass greater financial support. By this means Chinese pastors could also further consolidate their status because of achieving the three-selfgoals.

Secondly, it is well-known that the Presbyterian churches of southern Fujian founded the first “Chinese Presbytery” in China, setting an excellent example for the Chinese church in the 20th century. Further research has found that the Ecumenical Movement was promoted by missionaries, reflecting how they tackled problems in China. Though there were missionaries who had been working alone and belonged to different missionary societies, they shared similar aims and faced similar problems in China, and so cooperation was made much more attractive.

Finally, the churches themselves thought they should work together, forming one “group” so as to deal with practical problems and reach some new solutions. This article will describe the general situation and find out how the Ecumenical Movement took place under these circumstances.