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## From the Editor

The 7th National Chinese Christian Conference met in Beijing May 22-27, 2002. The Conference generally meets at five-year intervals to assess the work of the outgoing Standing Committees of the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (TSPM), to elect new officers, pass resolutions on important matters facing the church, revise their respective constitutions and chart a course for the coming five years. At the 2002 Conference, new leaders were chosen for both national bodies. Rev. Cao Shengjie was elected President of the CCC, the first woman ever to hold the office, and Elder Ji Jianhong was chosen to be Chairperson of the TSPM. As materials were being prepared for this 16<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Chinese Theological Review*, many documents of the Conference had not yet been made available, but the Work Report of the outgoing Standing Committees as well as the revised constitutions are included here.

The revised constitutions go further in setting out the structure and governing regulations for each organization, their officers and members than these documents have in the past. Particularly noteworthy are articles on the use and management of finances and qualifications for officers. Overall there is more emphasis on relationships with related government departments and the legal status of each organization. This reflects the concern, echoed in the Work Report, that "religious work" on the part of the government be regularized and not a matter of summary "administrative measures." It is also part of the often-invoked adaptation of religion, here Christianity, to socialist society: setting the church on a solid footing in society according to the same norms that govern other "mass organizations." The opening and closing addresses by the incumbents, a short biographical sketch of each, and names of the new Standing Committee and Advisory Committee members round out this section on the 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference.

Among the other essays and articles in this issue, the text of a presentation by Cao Shengjie includes current statistics and advice to overseas friends in their relationships with the Chinese church.

The Commission on Theological Reconstruction continues its work. Several essays address this topic directly, stressing the need for the church to keep pace with a rapidly modernizing society and seeking to reassure a largely conservative Christian constituency that although theology can, and must, change and adapt, basic Christian faith retains its essential substance and does not change. The church, it is argued, must adapt to the society that forms its context, both in order to grow and develop, and to play its rightful role in society. A plurality of theological views is needed to respond to the spiritual needs of an increasingly pluralistic society.

Two reports on a joint Shanghai-jiangsu symposium on theological reconstruction are interesting for their picture of provincial-level efforts to win hearts and minds among clergy and pastoral workers for the cause of theological exploration. In the issues that

come up for discussion among Christian clergy and lay leaders we glimpse the issues they wrestle with in their ministries, and the challenges the organizers of the study sessions and seminars face. Similar seminars and symposia are being held in other provinces.

Wang Aiming's essay contains his 15 points on theological reconstruction, which have been widely circulated overseas.

As always, I am grateful to the authors of the essays in this volume who have allowed their work to be shared through the imperfect medium of translation. Any errors in representing their work are entirely my own. To minimize the inelegancies and pitfalls of back-translation, quotations have been changed from direct to indirect when the quoted work could not be consulted in its original language or standard English translation.

In referring to the various levels of Church and Three-Self structure in this issue, I have mostly abandoned the use of *lianghui* or the two bodies, etc. for the simpler and, I hope, clearer, expedient of CCC, TSPM or CCC/TSPM for the national level and CC/TSM with the appropriate modifier (local/ regional) for other levels. Biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV.

Please note that the editorial e-mail address has changed: [ctreview@att.net](mailto:ctreview@att.net). The mailing address remains the same. The publisher's address and e-mail have also changed and these may be found on the copyright page of this issue.

This volume marks the final year of partial support of this publication by a three-year ecumenical project grant to the China Christian Council by the Council for World Mission. I would like to express my own gratitude and that of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTE) for their assistance. As ever, I am grateful to the FTE for their continuing support of this journal and in particular to Dr. Marvin Hoff and Mrs. Joanne Hoff. I would also like to thank Ms. Suzanne Johnson of San Francisco Theological Seminary for her invaluable technical assistance on this issue.

Janice Wickeri

\* \* \*

*A Chinese Contribution to Ecumenical Theology: Selected Writings of Bishop K.H. Ting* edited by Janice & Philip Wickeri

A selection of essays and sermons from Bishop Ting's nearly 60-year career as a church leader and theologian. Published June 2000, 1 28pp. From WCC Publications, World Council of Churches, PO Box 2100, 121 1 Geneva 2, Switzerland

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## THE SEVENTH NATIONAL CHINESE CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

### **Put Down Roots and Build, Strengthen Ourselves, Move with the Times and Run the Church Well**

*Work Report of the 7th National Christian Conference* PRESENTED BY CAO SHENGJIE

At the request of the 6th TSPM Standing Committee and the 4th CCC Standing Committee, this work report is submitted for consideration.

We, delegates from Protestant churches all over China, are joyfully gathered here in Beijing today. We are grateful for the past five years, for China's modernization and the return of Hong Kong and Macau to the motherland, for Beijing's successful bid to host the (2008) Olympics, for China's entry into the WTO, and with it, the first rank of nations. At the same time, we offer heartfelt praise to God for the fact that the Chinese Church, greatly blessed in Christ, is the recipient of deep love from God and the people.

In these five years, tremendous changes have taken place in the international arena, politics has become multipolar and the economy global, yet peace and development remain the themes of the times. Since 9/11 especially, the revulsion of people of every nation toward terrorism has been expressed in a demand for world peace. During the past five years, with an exalted sense of responsibility and mission for China, Chinese Christians have joined with their fellow citizens in the task of modernization. In 1998, when China experienced unprecedented floods, we Chinese Christians joined with our compatriots to write a heroic chapter in our history. Among the delegates to our Conference today are outstanding educators who focus on the moral formation of students, scientists who contribute to technological progress in China, and performers who make the glories of Chinese music known overseas. The words and actions of Chinese Christians illustrate that we have been profoundly encouraged by the "three represents" of General Secretary Jiang Zemin, have actively echoed their strategy of "rule by virtue" and have contributed our strength to the wealth and prosperity of our nation.

Today, we are pleased by the high level of attention given to religious work by the Party and government. In an important statement at the national Party conference on religious work in December 2001, Secretary Jiang emphasized that religious work was related to promotion of the two civilizations, to strengthening ethnic unity, maintaining social stability and safeguarding the great enterprise of national security and unity. The statement supported religious circles in mobilizing all internal positive factors to serve the development and stability of society, redoubling encouragement for Chinese Christians and engendering a deep sense that they bear an important responsibility.

In these five years, the Chinese Church has been blessed by God with the prayers and hard work of colleagues and fellow Christians at every level of the TSPM and CCC. We have achieved solid results in promoting theological reconstruction and in every aspect of our work. Here, we send personal greetings in the Lord to all co-workers and

believers in China and express our sincere gratitude to leaders at all levels and persons in every sector of society who have supported and helped us. At this time we remember especially those who have *gone to rest from their labors in the Lord* during these past five years: advisors to the TSPM and CCC Wang Shengyin and Ren Zhongxiang; Vice-Chair of the TSPM Li Shoubao; Vice-President of the CCC Cai Yuesheng; members of the Standing Committees of the TSPM and CCC Yang Taihua, Cheng Buyun, Xiong Boxiang, Cao Guanghua, Zheng Zhengguang; committee members of the TSPM and CCC Chen Dexin, Liu Baozhu, Long Kaihua and Hong Tiande. May God establish the work of their hands.

Looking back, we see that God's blessing and promise has been ever present with the Church in China. In what follows, I will report briefly on the work of the TSPM and CCC, and raise some requests and suggestions for that work in future.

### **1 Carry Out the Work before Us; Work as One to Run the Church Well**

The 6th National Christian Council summed up the intent expressed by "run the Church well according to the three-self principle" as "four needs." These were: 1) The need to persist in maintaining our independence and keeping the initiative in our own hands; 2) The need for patriotic education; 3) The need to work hard to increase unity; and 4) The need to vigorously carry out the "three wells." And on the basis of carrying out these "four needs," "ten tasks" were formulated. Chief among these ten tasks were "strengthening the efforts of Christian Councils and Three-Self Committees at all levels to build themselves up," and "strengthening theological education and the development of theological thinking (theological reconstruction)." To this end, this TSPM/CCC summarized the experience of the TSPM on its 50th anniversary and made this, along with the active promotion of theological reconstruction, its point of entry in promoting construction and development of the Chinese Church.

#### *1 Fifty years of TSPM experience points the way for the Chinese Church.*

On September 23, 2000 the TSPM/CCC opened a meeting in Beijing to mark the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the TSPM. The two national bodies had prepared thoroughly for this meeting, clearly and conscientiously taking stock of the historical practice of the Chinese Christian TSPM over these 50 years. It was a significant work of connecting the present with what had gone before. In December 2002, the first "Seminar on the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Chinese Protestant Churches," held in Shanghai, looked back on and affirmed the movement at its beginnings: its exposure of the relationship of the western missionary movement with the imperialist aggressors, raising the anti-imperialist patriotic consciousness of the mass of Christians, and promoting the three-self path of self-government, self-support and self-propagation-the unshakable foundation stone of the TSPM. This common recognition laid the foundation for summing up the fruits and experience of the TSPM over 50 years. Celebratory activities were initiated by all Three-Self Committees and Christian Councils, 196 manuscripts were submitted by co-workers and believers taking part in a call for papers to mark the anniversary. With the passage by the Third Plenary of the

Joint Standing Committees of this NCCC and a reading to the meeting of *Love Country Love Church: Toward the New Century with One Heart 50 Years of the TSPM* (hereafter: *50 Years*), the 50 years of the TSPM were divided into three periods, and it was specially pointed out that, following the Second Plenary of the Joint Standing Committees of this NCCC (hereafter "the Jinan Meeting"), the TSPM had entered a new period of theological reconstruction.

In the course of the TSPM's 50-year history, we have become aware that: the core of the movement is to gain and protect the independence of the Chinese Church; the foundation of the TSPM is love country, love church; the guarantee of the TSPM is to increase unity and uphold the principle of mutual respect in matters of faith; and the goal of the TSPM is to run the church well. The active development and promotion of theological reconstruction is a deepening of the TSPM. The *50 Years* report included a careful and detailed examination and consideration of the history of the TSPM and is an important document of both historical and current import. Taking history as its reference, it opens up the future, pointing the direction for the ongoing development of Chinese Christianity.

The Meeting to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the TSPM garnered the attention of all sectors in society. Members of the Standing Committee of the Political Department of the Party Central Committee and Chair of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Li Ruihuan attended and met with delegates. The Vice-Chair of the CPPCC and Head of the United Front Department Wang Zhaoguo gave a major speech at the plenary on behalf of the Party Central Committee and the State Council. Department Head Wang and Ye Xiaowen, Head of the Religious Affairs Bureau, in their remarks to the Third Plenary of this NCCC, both heartily affirmed the Chinese Christian policy of upholding its independence and self-government, as set out in *50 Years*, and noted their belief that the TSPM was an example of the successful practice of the spirit of patriotism in the realm of Chinese Christianity.

## *2 Strive to Implement the Resolution of the Jinan Meeting: Promote Theological Reconstruction.*

At the Jinan Meeting, the TSPM/CCC resolved to "Strengthen Theological Reconstruction." Following the meeting, with Bishop K.H. Ting's support, a Commission to Promote Theological Reconstruction was set up. The task of this Commission was to emphasize the unity of Chinese Christianity past and present, communicate the necessity of theological reconstruction, study the goals, principles, process and the formation of a common understanding of theological reconstruction and send personnel from the national levels of CCC and TSPM to take part in seminars and discussion of promotional methods conducted at the provincial and directly administered municipality level. The national TSPM and CCC have set up Study Seminars on *Love Never Ends*, Study Seminars on The Bible in Chinese Christianity and so on; have published five specialized compilations including *On Theological Reconstruction* (based on *Love Never Ends*), as well as a Chinese Christian Theological Reconstruction series, aimed

at giving the work of theological reconstruction a solid impetus. The Commission on Women's Work and that on Rural Churches have also held seminars on the topic.

According to statistics, 26 provincial, autonomous region and directly-administered municipality level Three-Self Committees and Christian Councils have undertaken various types of study activities related to theological reconstruction. Some have published special pamphlets, some have held sessions to explain and communicate the idea in city and county churches. The recognition of the necessity for theological reconstruction on the part of the majority of pastoral workers taking part has been raised, their self-awareness is gradually increasing and there has been some positive response among young and middle-aged co-workers. Theological reconstruction has also garnered the support and commendation of intellectuals sympathetic to Christianity but outside the church. Some scholars feel theological reconstruction is "a high level expression of Chinese Christianity's adaptation to modern Chinese society."

It should be noted that the promotion of theological reconstruction is not equally developed throughout the Church. In some provinces, autonomous regions and directly administered municipalities, the response has been slower. There are several main reasons for this. Some leading church personnel are content with the current growth rate of the number of believers, and the development of the church's ministry, and are unable to promptly recognize the significance of theological reconstruction; some are unclear as to where to begin in joining this new work; and some still have a mental block and hesitate. To deal with these situations, the TSPM/CCC invited provincial level CC and TSM leaders to take part in a Study Session on the Work of Promoting Chinese Christian Theological Reconstruction. Through study, good results were achieved in terms of overall understanding and methods of promoting theological reconstruction.

*3 Continue to expand overseas exchanges while protecting the nation's sovereignty and interests.*

Statistics show that from 1997 to the end of 2001, the CCC national office received 261 groups, a total of 3,301 persons, from churches and individuals from various countries and regions. One-hundred-twelve visiting delegations were sent out from our Church, for a total of 295 persons, in order to strengthen friendship with the church worldwide.

In these five years, the international political situation has changed dramatically. In overseas relationships, the national offices have stressed beginning with national interests, advocating justice, calling for peace and actively introducing the situation of religious freedom which Chinese Christians enjoy. In 1998, for example, persons from American religious circles visited China at Jiang Zemin's invitation and the TSPM/CCC took part in receiving them, enabling American people and Christians to better understand the real situation of Chinese Christians. In 2000, CCC President Wenzao Han and Vice-President Cao Shengjie represented Chinese Christians in a delegation of Chinese religious leaders at the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders held at the UN in New York, where they expressed the desire for peace of Chinese Christians and the efforts they have made towards it, while at the

same time criticizing the attacks on religious issues in China by anti-China forces in the West.

In September 2000, the CCC/TSPM published the timely "Declaration against the Vatican's History-Distorting Canonization of So-called 'Saints'" in response to the warping of history and the despicable actions of the Vatican in this act of canonization. In response to wanton western defilement of China's human rights using Falun Gong as a pretext, in 2001, leading personnel of the TSPM/CCC led multiple delegations to the US, Switzerland, etc., meeting widely with overseas church people and organizations to clarify the facts. In April 2001, the CCC/TSPM published an Open Letter on Falun Gong, and some co-workers took part in activities of the Anti-Heresy Association, aimed at western anti-China forces using religion and human rights issues to attack China. In July 2001, the Statement on Taiwan was published, expressing Chinese Christians' firm opposition to Taiwan independence and their strong desire for national unity.

#### *4 Begin concrete work on the "ten tasks."*

For five years, the national offices have been strengthening ties with local TSMs and CCs and aiding in the practical solution of problems. Since 1997, for example, the national TSPM and CCC have organized Seminars in Self-Propagation; Workshops in Strengthening Self-Construction; Symposium on Work for Provincial TSM/CC Leadership; etc. Leaders of the TSPM/CCC have also visited local churches throughout the country and held symposiums with provincial level secretaries-general and general secretaries in the eastern, northern and western parts of the country respectively to share about work in those places and to promote theological reconstruction.

The 12 Commissions set up by the outgoing TSPM/ CCC have also initiated a good deal of work. The Commission to Promote Self-Support, in the course of managing the Fund for Church Construction Aid, has conscientiously set up methods of dispersal and operating rules, stressing support of churches in poverty-stricken areas in the central and western areas and in ethnic minority areas. According to statistics, at the end of 2001, this Fund had contributed funds and materials to churches in the amount of 678.5 million yuan to 119 churches and meeting points in 18 provinces. Adding stipends given to 599 seminary graduates and emergency aid, the total expenditure comes to 833.882 million yuan. The Commission on Rural Churches, based on a survey of lay training classes at the grass roots, revised the Draft Curriculum for Lay Church Worker Training, as well as holding a Symposium on Lay Training Classes in the Chinese Church in 1998 with targeted discussion on how to improve this training in rural churches.

In the past five years, the TSPM/CCC, has supported the efforts of local churches in their own upbuilding, and used a variety of methods for training personnel suitable for the church in these times. In 2001, the TSPM/CCC commissioned Nanjing Union Theological Seminary to run the first two-year Continuing Education Classes for Chinese Pastors. Thirty young and middle-aged co-workers from provincial and municipal churches were enrolled in the course, whose aim is the practical and

theoretical formation of pastors who will be the mainstay of the Chinese Church. The Commission on Theological Education has also held sharing sessions on hermeneutics, Bible and systematic theology, and supported Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in bringing its assessment process to an early conclusion. In 2001, on the basis of need and in line with government regulations, Nanjing Seminary invited foreign professors to lecture in Bible. Seminaries including Nanjing Seminary and Yanjing Seminary have organized lectures and seminars, or held classes and produced course materials on theological reconstruction to promote consideration of the theoretical aspects of the subject. To improve the pedagogical conditions of each seminary and school, the Commission has offered aid for library and teaching materials.

By the end of 2001, the TSPM/CCC had printed a cumulative total of 28 million Bibles, as well as facing page Chinese-English bilingual Bibles and Study Bibles, and study aids put together by Chinese pastors. In addition, 55 devotional works and Bible study aids were published for a total of 2.5 million copies (1.2 million copies of new works; 1.3 million copies of reprints). In the area of sacred music, *The New Hymnal* was printed in a bilingual Chinese-English version. Other music publications included *Hymns for Christmas* and VCDs like *Chinese Christians Praise*. The TSPM/ CCC also took an active role in revamping the editorial policy and layout of the church monthly *Tian Feng*, so that it might better satisfy the needs of a developing church.

The past five years have also shown us that many inadequacies and areas for improvement remain in our work.

Chinese society, politics, economy and culture have changed tremendously and at breath-taking speed over these five years; the transformation is unmistakable. Though the TSPM/CCC has called for Chinese Christianity to adapt to Chinese socialist society, there has been little research into actual results, and we are as yet unable to do a timely stocktaking and give concrete guidance to the churches. It is clear that the perspective, planning and guiding aspects of the work are all inadequate, and worrying problems abound in all the churches. For example, in some churches the local leadership has a very shallow understanding of the selfhood and independence of the church, and is unable to uphold the three-self principle; in some areas denominationalism has resurfaced and is affecting unity; some local leaders in the TSM/CC do not follow the Chinese Church Order, but act summarily; in some churches no provision is made for regular election of new leadership; and some churches have been affected by corruption. Though the TSPM/CCC have done some investigation of, these problems, an oversight mechanism is lacking, and this is something we must deal conscientiously with in our work from now on.

## **2 Be "Rooted and Built Up," Strong and In Step with the Times**

We stand at the start of the 21st century. If our Chinese Church is to keep up with the times, be "rooted and built up in him and established in the faith" (Col. 2: 7) and enable the church to build itself up in step with our rapidly developing nation, we must see clearly the tasks ahead, and we can do this only by linking our direction of "making the

church well run according to the three-self principle" closely to the opportunities and challenges of the times.

The National Conference on Religious Work stressed that religious freedom is "a basic right of citizens," and "an expression of respect and protection for human rights," and further, pointed out the long-term nature of religion, its mass character and its special complexity, and stressed that religious work on its part should be understood as structured and regularized. All this shows that there is a theoretical basis for the government's respect for and protection of its citizens' religious freedom. From now on the policy of religious freedom will be implemented more conscientiously and in a more holistic way, and religious affairs managed according to the law. We will also undertake to assist the government in implementing the policy of religious freedom and in protecting the legal rights and interests of Chinese Christianity. This will guarantee the important external conditions for the healthy development of Chinese Christianity. Following China's entry into the WTO, Chinese Christianity, as one important channel of people-to-people friendship, will necessarily have even greater exchanges and contacts with Christianity around the globe, sharing experiences and increasing understanding. This is also beneficial to the healthy development of Chinese Christianity.

Yet the international situation is highly volatile. Terrorism, ethnic strife and religious extremism have drawn the attention of people all over the world. The 9/11 incident has made it all the more clear to us that religious questions are often entangled with international struggles and clashes. And Christianity is also facing a new and complicated situation and new problems both at home and internationally. Forces overseas use Christianity to undertake politically-motivated "Westernization" and "division" within China: they vainly hope to control Chinese Christianity in order to set up power bases for themselves in China to achieve their own ends of harming and overthrowing our political authority. Such efforts have never ceased; in fact, with increasing openness in China, they have intensified. A number of Christian groups overseas long ago laid their plans to gather strength to re-enter China. It is their vain hope to change our direction of "running the church well according to the three-self principle" and we must be vigilant against them.

In an ever-changing situation, Chinese Christians must grasp opportunities and welcome challenges; the crux lies in how we renew our consciousness and strengthen self-construction. We must seek the guidance of the Spirit, understand the times and, relying on God's power and might, be rooted and built up in him. We must be strengthened in order to resist infiltration by outside forces and build up the body of Christ. If we are unable to establish the Church in China in the excellent environment we now have, the responsibility for its destruction by such outside forces of evil will lie with ourselves.

How are we to run the church well, while being rooted and built up, strengthened and in step with the times in the present situation? Let me enumerate four needs:

*1 We must deepen our understanding of the adaptation of Christianity to socialist society.*

The issue of religion's adaptation to socialist society raised by General Secretary Jiang illustrates that the nation fully affirms, and moreover, hopes, that religion can play a positive role in socialist society. On this earth, Christians are first of all citizens. Our basic interests are one with those of our people: the faith and doctrines of Christianity are not in contradiction to the goal of building a civilized, democratic and rich modernized nation. Adaptation to socialist society has never meant changing our faith, it has simply required of us that we, like the whole Chinese people, love our country, uphold the socialist system, uphold the leadership of the Communist Party, and observe the laws and regulations and the guiding policies of the nation. Religious activities must follow and serve the highest interests of the nation and the whole interests of its people: this is a government requirement for all social groups-there is nothing special about it, and we naturally comply.

As for Christians, we must recognize that adaptation to socialist society is necessary for our own existence and development. We believe that Christianity is the truth revealed by God and that the Church was born following the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. No matter whether we look at the New Testament or at the historical development of the Church, the Spirit of God has never ceased to guide God's people, through all the different eras of history, applying appropriate measures, even bold reforms, to move the Church forward.

Acts 15 tells of the Jerusalem meeting, "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us (the apostles)," that the Gentiles who came to believe in the Lord did not have to be circumcised or keep the laws of Moses, and this enabled Christianity to go into the whole world. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Luther responded to historical developments by raising the need for reform in the Church that then ruled the whole of Europe, and a Protestant Church separate from the Catholic Church at Rome was born. After Liberation in China, Christians initiated the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, expressing their support for new China. Carrying out Three-Self was also a way of adapting to new China. Without this movement, Chinese Christianity could not have developed as it has today. Paul said, "Only let us hold fast to what we have attained" (Phil. 3: 16). Development never ceases through time; under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must unceasingly adjust our own step if we are to enable the Gospel to be widely preached and the Church to be established.

If Chinese Christianity is to adapt to socialist society today, four points are important:

First, rights entail duties. We Christians are all concerned to enjoy the right to freedom of religious belief. In the same way, then, we must try to live out the slogan "a good Christian is a good citizen," and fulfill the duties of a good citizen. There are already many good models of this among Christians. We hope Christians everywhere will do even more to play a positive role in society.

Second, patriotism must be law-abiding. Religious faith is a private matter and the State has never intervened; but religious activities cannot but be closely related to State and society. We must strengthen education in the law, raise consciousness of being law-abiding, conscientiously consider the interests of nation and people and hold activities within the bounds of the Constitution and regulations. We neither can nor should, in the name of religious freedom, cast off the legal oversight of the government.

Third, we must strive to maintain the unity between "believer" and "unbeliever". Christians are a tiny proportion of the Chinese population. The State guarantees us freedom of religion and we must also respect that others have the freedom not to believe or to believe in another religion. This affects the image of Christianity in China and our relations with the majority of people. A Church which cannot gain the goodwill of the majority of people cannot easily build itself up.

Fourth, genuine adaptation is not expressed only in patriotic behavior, but must be reflected in thought and understanding, including patriotic awakening and bringing theological thinking in line with social progress.

*2 Of all that is important for running the Church well according to the three-self principle, theological reconstruction is most important.*

Like churches throughout the world, the Chinese Church is built up on the foundation of Jesus Christ as preached by the Apostles. As Paul said, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11 ).

The Church exists in a specific time, nation and society. The Church in every country develops its theology in that time and that place, to guide the Church in building itself up on this foundation. The theological reconstruction the Chinese Church is undertaking at present must bring together the essence and culture of China in describing the basic faith, moral principles and standards of Christianity, in order that we may preach the Gospel better, help believers lead healthy and uplifting spiritual lives, run the church well according to the three-self principle, and enable Christianity to adapt to socialist society.

Propagation of the gospel is the church's unchangeable mission, but how to correctly and effectively spread the gospel in these present times is inseparably linked to theology. Jesus' way of eternal life can be life-transforming for human beings, enabling them to cast off sin and gain new life and values. If we base the demands of the gospel only upon a foundation of material poverty, ignorance and social hopelessness, or if we overemphasize its utilitarian content signs and wonders and banishment of ill fortune though we might quickly attract a lot of attention and people into the church, there would be no foundation, and this state of things could not last long.

We must use correct theology to lead believers in their pilgrimage for growth in their spiritual lives. This should be expressed in the life of the Church, and at the same time

expressed in the life of society. "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2: 17). "...the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). An abundant spiritual life cannot be lived apart from an ethical one, even less can it become an irrational "enthusiasm," lest it lead to the dangers of extremism. A Church in which faith and reason interact, where faith and action are one, where grace and truth are found in one body, is built up on the foundation stone of Jesus Christ and not upon sand. It is solid and will not collapse.

If we want to run the church well according to the three-self principle, theological reconstruction is the theoretical foundation of the "four needs" for doing so. If we wish to trod the path of independence and self-government boldly and with a sense of righteousness, make clear the relationship between the church's particularity and its universality, the church must make care for society and support for good behavior its responsibility and must affirm the nature of the church as lampstand here on earth. We must resolve the present and multiple problems that exist in the church: such phenomena as the desire for greater personal power. We must revere Christ's position as head of the Church. All these things are closely tied to a correct theological understanding. Thus theological reconstruction is the basic requirement for building up the Church at present.

In the course of promoting theological reconstruction, we have come to see that we must separate basic faith from theology where appropriate. Theological reconstruction in no way changes basic faith; rather its role is to protect and guarantee our basic faith. The promotion of theological reconstruction can both witness to Chinese Christians' maintaining a pure faith, and have a lively intellectual witness; it is beneficial both to Chinese Christians' unity founded upon a common faith, and to a witness that is appropriate to the times.

In the promotion of theological reconstruction, it is necessary to note the following factors: that it be founded upon the Bible; that it is part of the continuity of the historical traditions of our basic faith; that we begin from our church's experience of following the three-self path; that we seek to unite with the special characteristics of progressive Chinese culture. We must study our forebears' theological knowledge and fruits, but we cannot be constrained by any particular theological system; nor can we imitate the ancients or western views. We want only thinking which is in line with biblical truth, of benefit to running the church well according to the three-self principle and able to help Chinese Christianity adapt to socialist society. Such thinking we encourage and spread. In the course of our discussions, theological viewpoints which are tinged with colonial consciousness, which offend our national essence, which are not appropriate to the development of the times, will naturally be scrutinized and adjusted.

Theological reconstruction has become the central task of our church today in its being rooted and built up in Christ, and it will play a guiding role in the overall building up of Christianity. We expect that the fruits of theological reconstruction will raise the quality of faith of Christian believers in general, and enable Chinese Christianity to increase not only in "years" but in "wisdom" (see Luke 2: 52).

*3 Under the principle of independence, develop overseas exchanges while firmly resisting infiltration.*

"Independence" is the core of the Three-Self Movement, the central principle we must hold to in building up the Church.

In the midst of "economic globalization," some see a "global village," and view talk of "national authority" and "independence" as meaningless. This is a completely mistaken view. The facts show that in the economic realm, "globalization" has not eliminated the difference between rich nations and poor nations, or the gulf between strong nations and weak nations. National borders remain and the contradictions among national and ethnic interests are sharper than ever.

There is in Christianity a theological view that "the universal Church is one family", this is speaking of the spiritual side of the church. We believe that, throughout time, all who call upon the Lord's name belong to the spiritual fellowship that is the Church; they are brothers and sisters in Christ. But this is not to suggest that there are no differences in the church on earth based on national, ethnic or cultural background. The Bible never sanctioned a situation in which the church of one nation controls the church in another nation. The painful history of Christianity in China teaches us, and even more, alerts us, that we cannot abandon the three-self principle and return to the old path of being dominated by foreign countries.

Now that our nation is more open, we are willing to increase contacts with all church organizations and individuals who respect the authority of our nation and our Church, who meet us on an equal footing and who are friendly to us, who, on a basis of legality, openness and friendship initiate exchanges and share with us in the Lord's work. We also wish to increase understanding and contacts with churches in Hong Kong and Taiwan and with overseas Chinese churches on a foundation of "one country, two systems," "the three-mutuals principle," and "upholding national unity."

But vigilance is required: presently foreign forces making use of Christianity to infiltrate China have found new methods and there is no end to the tactics they employ. They are stealthy and invidious. Under the guise of "evangelism" they send in people to undertake secret activities; in the content of their preaching, they create total opposition between "believers and unbelievers," encouraging and even organizing believers to flaunt government authority. Another tactic makes use of channels outside the church, using persons with legal status to undertake secret activities. China wants to attract foreign investment and some overseas forces establish a base for religious activities through investment. China wants to open up and develop its western regions, so others set their sights on the northwest, claiming to be following in the footsteps left by former missionaries. Still others use scholarly research to spread their opposition to Christianity's three-self path. And there are some who penetrate three-self churches, mostly using contributions to pave their way, creating a dependence in those churches on foreign sources, making these existing churches into their own base to injure "self-

government" and "self-support" and go on to use sermons, training, illicitly published materials, video, the internet, etc., to harm "self-propagation," driving a wedge between believers and the rest of the Chinese people. As openness is broadened, our duty to oppose westernization and division must be even firmer, unwavering, upholding our principle of running the church independently ourselves. We must pay special attention that we not make "self-support" into "they-support" out of a desire for funds from outside, thus dissipating the fruits of Three-Self amassed over so many years.

#### *4 Stress rural and grassroots church work; firmly resist heresy in Christian guise.*

In recent years, there has been an explosion of heretical activities under the banner of Christianity. The disastrous results of Falun Gong-death and suffering-have been condemned by the whole society. The government has outlawed them according to the law to protect the people from their harm.

Christianity is firmly opposed to Falun Gong. But heresies waving the flag of Christianity have fooled many Christians with serious results. For example, sect, the government has explicitly banned, such as the Shouters, the Disciples, the Established Kings, the Lord God Sect and I: astern Lightning, have been active in many provinces. Some believers have been taken in and have become pillars of these groups It is characteristic of these heresies that they make use of the Bible, using chapters out of context to create their heresy. Their leaders set themselves up as gods to be revered by their followers; they set up secret organizations, tightly controlled at every level, disseminate anti government, anti society views; they have control over believers, banning rational thinking; they are morally corrupt and law-breaking For example, Eastern Lightning says that Jesus will come again as a woman; the leaders of Established King and the Lord God sects both style themselves gods, which not only allows them to amass money, but to lure young women to "dedicate" themselves to their lust. In 2000, some dozen hapless believers, listening to some heresy or other, cut off all dealings with the world for long periods and nearly died as a result. In the face of such shocking incidents, we cannot turn a blind eye, but must adopt an attitude of high responsibility to God, the nation and the Church, resolve to oppose heresy and, with all our strength, rescue believers who have fallen under their spell.

At present these heresies are mainly active in rural areas and small towns, because rural Christians' educational level is lower and they lack a correct understanding of Christian truth; there is also a serious lack in rural villages of pastors with theological training. These serious facts tell us that if we do not pay attention to rural church work, and strive to raise the quality of believers there, the future of all Christianity in China will be affected.

### **3 Grasp Opportunities to Build Up Chinese Christianity in the New Century**

In line with the demands outlined above, we would like to raise a number of priorities for our future work in the hope that our co-workers and fellow Christians will, with one heart

and mind, truly establish the body of Christ, so that "The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former" (Hag. 2:9).

*1 Resolutely promote theological reconstruction.*

To continue to deepen theological reconstruction, the TSPM/CCC must grasp the draft "Outline for the Development of Chinese Christian Theological Reconstruction"; cooperating with local CCs and TSMs, seminaries and bible schools in initiating study activities on theological reconstruction; organizing specialists to carry out case studies of the subject and raise the theoretical level.

In addition to continuing forums in *Tian Feng* and the *Nanjing Theological Review*, which serve to mobilize opinion, the TSPM and CCC must continue the Chinese Christian Theological Reconstruction Series, publishing the fruits of exploration of pastors and co-workers.

The TSPM and CCC must actively organize, plan and publish books and materials helpful to the building up of Chinese Christianity, to satisfy the demands of theological research, theological education, evangelism and guidance for believers' healthy spiritual lives. They must tap their potential to set up an effective national distribution system.

The TSPM and CCC must promptly assess activities related to theological reconstruction held at Nanjing and Yanjing seminaries, gradually extending these to other theological education institutions, so that these can truly serve as bases for theological reconstruction.

*2 Strengthen the construction of the CCC/TSPM at the national, regional and local level.*

The TSPM/CCC should rally its personnel and funds to make the two bodies' organizational framework more rational, rigorous and effective; establish connections, promote unity, service and cooperation, exercising a guiding function for local CCs and TSMs. It should strengthen its oversight and continually improve its system of meetings, finances, auditing, personnel, etc. Incidents and individuals who seriously offend against the Chinese Church Order should be exposed in *Tian Feng* and in the *CC/TSPM News*, as a way of nipping evil in the bud.

The TSPM and CCC, and TSMs and CCs at all levels, must lay the highest stress upon the thinking and moral formation of personnel, encourage loyalty and service and a spirit of strict self-discipline, openness to regulation, and of serving the grassroots church better.

*3 Support and assist the construction of grassroots churches.*

The TSPM and CCC must provide effective resources for lay training in rural churches by way of personnel, funding and teaching materials. The continuing opening up of literacy and Bible-reading classes for believers in the rural church, classes and all sorts of activities in general cultural and scientific knowledge should be promoted to raise

rural Christians' understanding of the faith and their educational level. TSMs and CCs at all levels should stress and care for the upbuilding of the rural grassroots church, where a church pastors meeting points under its care, so that the churches can lead the meeting points and guidance be strengthened. Seminaries and Bible Schools should train theological students to serve in rural and poor areas, to raise the ability to resist heresy; and show more concern for them in their work and help them.

#### *4 Strengthen Chinese Christianity's Contacts and Communication with Overseas Groups.*

The TSPM/CCC must adopt effective measures to expand its overseas contacts, print publicity materials and set up a *Tian Feng* website. TSPM/CCC should initiate its own contacts with theological scholars and church leaders from overseas churches, introducing theological reconstruction and all aspects of the ministry of the Church in China, sharing experiences of each in theological study, theological education and other aspects of ministry.

#### *5 Accelerate Training of Church Personnel.*

The TSPM/CCC should accelerate the training of personnel in theology, church management, Christian literature and publication, foreign languages, etc, adopting all effective means and measures, so that we can establish a contingent of qualified personnel within a set time.

TSPM/CCC should strengthen Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in the areas of theological study, pedagogy and training suitable theological students, working to achieve a higher standard. Other seminaries and Bible schools should become increasingly regularized, clarify their training goals, and raise their level in staff and funding. TSPM/ CCC will continue to ask Nanjing Seminary to run continuing education courses for serving pastors. Qualified institutions should gradually establish further in-house training and enrichment courses for staff and continuing education for pastoral workers at the grass roots, to improve the system of professional training of personnel in the Chinese churches.

TSPM/CCC should continue to stress overseas study for students. In addition to gradual improvement in the selection system, major courses of study for students going abroad should be determined according to the concrete needs of the Chinese Church in a planned manner with goals in mind.

#### *6 Continue to care for society and serve the masses, bearing excellent witness to Christ.*

The TSPM/CCC calls upon Chinese Christians to do their utmost to develop Christian ethics and morals. As heirs to the fine moral tradition of China, they should strive to fully implement the draft guidelines for moral construction of citizens and bear good witness in their workplaces.

TSPM/CCC asks Chinese Christians to hold in unceasing prayer world peace, protection of the environment, halting the spread of drug use, HIV/AIDS and other dangers to humanity, and by whatever means, to take part in activities to benefit these causes.

The two national organizations and churches at all levels should serve society well, care for the weak and take part in suitable charitable activities according to local conditions, serving society with all their hearts and minds, to benefit the people.

Delegates, God has brought the Chinese Church into the new millennium. Our eyes are blessed because we have seen so many new things evolving. The whole world is watching us to see how we will witness to God in these times.

Our own people are also watching us to see how we will play a positive role in building spiritual civilization and promoting from above and take up what the believers of the whole church have entrusted to us. Let us be rooted and built up in Him, strengthened, and moving forward with the times. May we then better adapt to socialist society, make new contributions to our nation, society and people for the opening up of Chinese Christianity's tomorrow and strive to run the Chinese Church of the new century well according to the three-self principle.

Delegates, God has brought the Chinese Church into the new millennium. Our eyes are blessed because we have seen so many new things evolving. We are an independent church, determining our own path and building ourselves up within our nation's reformed and open socialist society. We are in an unprecedented situation, the like of which we have not seen before. This is a special blessing God has given to Chinese Christians. Concerned Christians around the world are watching us, to see how we will develop our own theology, how we will witness to God in these times. Our own people are also watching us to see how we will play a positive role in building spiritual civilization and promoting social morality. Our task is unusually formidable. We firmly believe that God guides us in all this and we go boldly forward. Let us together follow the vision by which God calls us to Him from above and take up what the believers of the whole church have entrusted to us. Let us be rooted and built up in Him, strengthened, and moving forward with the times. May we then better adapt to socialist society, make new contributions to our nation, society and people for the opening up of Chinese Christianity's tomorrow and strive to run the Chinese Church of the new century well according to the three-self principle.

## **Opening Speech to the 7th National Christian Conference**

JI JIANHONG

The opening of this 7<sup>th</sup> National Chinese Christian Conference is an occasion of great joy. On the happy occasions of our great nation's successful bid to host the 2008 Olympic games, the success of the APEC meeting in Shanghai and China's entry into the WTO, Chinese Christians celebrate together with the whole Chinese people, with incomparable pride in being Chinese and with praise for the accomplishments of our nation that have attracted worldwide attention. May God continue to bless China.

Under the leadership of the great Chinese Communist Party, not only has China's international status and influence increased, the growth of socialist economic construction proceeds steadily apace, there has been widespread improvement in our standard of living and in social stability and growth in the healthy development of political democratic life: all these express the right leadership of the Party Central Committee with General Secretary Jiang Zemin at its core. Modernization of Chinese socialism is approaching a new high tide and this is the hour of the great resurgence of the Chinese people. In December 2001 the Central Committee and State Council held a National Meeting on Religious Work, determined the basic task of the Party's religious work at the beginning of the new era, and offered guidance for our meeting here. Over the last five years, every aspect of the church's work has unfolded healthily and in good order, the three-self principle has reached new heights; the building up of the church has been laudable. God has showered abundant grace on the Chinese Church, and our 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference opens in just such wonderful circumstances.

We are extremely happy that Vice-Directors Liu Yandong and Li Dezhu of the Standing Committee, Vice Secretary General Zhu Xiaoming and Bureau Head Chang Rongjun of the United Front Department of the Party Central Committee; Director Ye Xiaowen, Vice Bureau Head Wang Zuo'an and other leading comrades of the Religious Affairs Bureau, along with comrades from provincial and municipal level bureaus, are all with us today. Our Church's venerable pastor, our esteemed Bishop Ting, is also with us, and friends from every sector of society who have long been concerned for and supported running the church well according to the three-self principle have also come to take part in our meeting. Allow me, on behalf of all delegates, to express our warmest welcome and heartfelt gratitude to these leaders, to Bishop Ting and to all our friends. (Of 300 delegates to this meeting, 23 are special invitees; 290 in attendance and ten apologies.)

The Chinese Church, with the unflinching efforts of colleagues everywhere, has promoted theological reconstruction with excellent results. This has been our most effective response, in the principle of running the church well through independence and self-determination, love for country and church, increasing unity and bringing about the adaptation of the church to socialist society, to the emerging new situation, new issues and new challenges.

At this meeting, we will not only look back on five years of solid work, but move a step further in theological reconstruction, independence, resistance to interference from outside, strengthening the church, running the church well, leading believers in healthy

pursuit of spiritual growth and realization of God's call to us to spread the gospel, as well as how to study and implement the spirit of the National Meeting on Religious Work, share and study it in the church. At this assembly, we will elect new committees and new leadership for the national CCC/TSPM. This will have great and far reaching significance for furthering theological reconstruction and actively promoting the adaptation of Christianity to socialist society in the next five years. We believe that with the efforts of the whole body of delegates here, this will be a Conference united, in step with the times, and particularly blessed by God.

## **Constitution of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China**

### **Article One General Principles**

- Section 1 This Committee shall be known as the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (National TSPM); together with the China Christian Council, known as the National Christian Offices (CCC/TSPM).
- Section 2 The TSPM serves as the patriotic and church loving organization of Chinese Christians.
- Section 3 The aim of this organization is to lead Christians to love the nation and the church; to glorify God and benefit the people; to abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations and policies of the State; to observe social mores, uphold the independence of the church; strengthen unity inside and outside the church; serve the aim of running the church well; and enable the church to adapt to socialist society.
- Section 4 This Committee accepts lawful administration by the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council and regulation as a mass organization by the State Civil Administration Department.
- Section 5 This Committee shall be based in Shanghai.

### **Article Two Scope of Duties**

- Section 6 The duties of the TSPM are as follows:
- (1) Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government, to unite all Chinese Christians to deeply love our socialist homeland and abide by its Constitution, laws, regulations and policies;
  - (2) To uphold self-government, self-support, self-propagation, independence and a self-run church as guiding principles, to defend and develop the achievements of the TSPM;
  - (3) To actively promote theological reconstruction;
  - (4) To assist the government in implementing the policy of freedom of religious belief and in safeguarding the legitimate rights of the church;
  - (5) To contribute its efforts in safeguarding national unity and stability; building socialist material and spiritual civilization; achieving national

unification and developing friendly international relationships; and safeguarding world peace;

- (6) The TSPM serves to strengthen contacts with all provincial, autonomous region and directly-administered municipality level Three-Self Committees, through channels of communication, exchange of experience, study and consultation on problems common to its counterparts at the provincial, autonomous region and directly-administered municipality levels.
- (7) The TSPM shall join with the CCC in convening the National Conference at prescribed intervals and may convene other joint meetings as the need arises,
- (8) The relationship between the TSPM and the CCC is one of cooperation with differentiation of function. The TSPM coordinates with the CCC to achieve all aspects of the work of Chinese Christianity;
- (9) It is the duty of Three-Self Committees at the provincial, autonomous region and directly-administered municipality level to observe and carry out the resolutions of the TSPM. The TSPM shall urge compliance and supervise in this regard.

### **Article Three Structure of the Organization; Election and Removal of Officers**

Section 7 The National Chinese Christian Conference is the highest body of this Committee. It is composed of delegates recommended by Three-Self Committees and Christian Councils (or Church Councils) at the provincial, autonomous region and directly administered municipality level. Its duties are:

- (1) The drafting and/or revision of this constitution;
- (2) Election of the members comprising the national committee of the TSPM;
- (3) Consideration of the Work Report and the Financial Report of the outgoing Standing Committee;
- (4) Discussion and determination of the guiding policies for the work of the incumbent Committee;
- (5) Determination on other matters of importance.

Section 8 A two-thirds majority of members must be present in order to convene the National Conference. Resolutions passed at the Conference take effect upon a minimum fifty percent affirmative vote of those present.

Section 9 The national Chinese Christian Conference is jointly convened by the Standing Committees of the present TSPM and CCC. It shall meet every five years, but when need arises, may be convened earlier or postponed. This is a matter for decision by the Standing Committees; however, postponement shall be limited to one year. The number of delegates and the method of their election shall be jointly decided by the Standing Committees of the TSPM and CCC.

Section 10 This Committee shall be elected by the National Chinese Christian Conference. Term of office shall run until the following meeting of that

Conference, with re-election leading to a further period of service. A two-thirds majority of members must be present to convene a meeting of the Committee and a two-thirds vote of members present is required to pass resolutions.

- Section 11 A plenary session of the National Conference shall be convened every two years jointly by the Standing Committees of the TSPM and CCC, or earlier or later when necessary.
- Section 12 This Committee shall consist of the Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons, a Secretary-General and members of the Standing Committee. An honorary Chairperson may be appointed.
- Section 13 The Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons and Secretary-General must possess the following qualifications:
- (1) Abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations and policies of the nation, and possess good political credentials,
  - (2) Enjoy a good reputation within the church;
  - (3) At the time of election, the ages of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons shall not exceed 75 years; the Secretary General is a full-time position and the incumbent's age shall not exceed 65 years at the time of election.
  - (4) Good health and the ability to shoulder a normal workload;
  - (5) Shall not have a criminal record resulting in loss of political rights;
  - (6) Be capable of fully representing the Committee in civil matters.
- Section 14 The Chairperson of this Committee is the legal representative of the organization. A Deputy Chairperson or the Secretary-General may serve as legal representative if this is so reported to and checked by the department responsible and approved by the relevant organization responsible for registry of mass social organizations.  
One serving as the legal representative of this Committee shall not simultaneously serve in the same capacity for another organization.
- Section 15 The Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons or Secretary-General, if re-elected, shall continue to serve, but service shall not exceed two terms.
- Section 16 Members have the following duties:
- (1) Consideration of the Work Report of the Standing Committee;
  - (2) Discussion and oversight of the implementation of the guiding policies of the National Conference;
  - (3) Election and removal of the Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons, Secretary-General and members of the Standing Committee;
  - (4) When necessary, supplementary members may be added to the Standing Committee, or an honorary Chairperson may be named.  
These shall serve until the next National Christian Conference.
- Section 17 The Standing Committees are the administrative body of the National Christian Conference. When the full body is not in session, the Standing Committees handle the business of the National Conference.
- Section 18 The Chairperson shall, with the assistance of the Deputy Chairpersons and Secretary General, direct the work of the Standing Committee.
- Section 19 The responsibilities of the Standing Committee are:

- (1) Together with the Standing Committee of the CCC, convene the National Chinese Christian Conference,
  - (2) Convene the plenary sessions of this Committee;
  - (3) Draft the Work Report of the Standing Committee, and invite consideration of same by the National Chinese Christian Conference or the Plenary Session of the TSPM/CCC;
  - (4) Thoroughly carry out the guiding policies for work determined by the National Conference;
  - (5) When necessary, recommend the co-option or withdrawal of committee members; those so co-opted shall serve until the next National Conference;
  - (6) When its work requires, the Standing Committee, together with the Standing Committee of the CCC, shall appoint working groups, or other specialized commissions, which can be adjusted or supplemented as necessary. These commissions shall work under the joint direction of the Executive Committees of the TSPM and CCC, and their respective Secretary-General and General Secretary. Their resolutions must be passed by a two-thirds majority and their term of office shall end with that of the Standing Committees which appoint them.
  - (7) To determine other matters of importance.
- Section 20 Two-thirds of the members must be present to convene a meeting of the Standing Committee. Resolutions must be passed with a two-thirds majority vote.
- Section 21 Meetings of the Standing Committee shall be convened by the Executive Committee once per year; when necessary they may be held more often or postponed.
- Section 22 The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons and Secretary-General. The Executive shall deal with the important ongoing business of the Standing Committee. It shall meet every six months. When necessary, the TSPM Executive Committee shall meet jointly with its CCC counterpart.
- Section 23 Associate Secretaries-General shall be nominated by the Secretary-General, subject to approval by the Standing Committee
- Section 24 Together with the CCC, the TSPM shall set up an Advisory Committee to facilitate access to the positive influence and potential of the older generation of those who have served as members in the past.
- (1) The Advisory Committee shall have two Directors, several Deputy Directors and members who shall be recommended by the Executive Committee of the National Conference and approved by the Plenary.
  - (2) The duties of the Advisory Committee are: Submitting proposals and suggestions for the work of the committee; when necessary, they may be invited to attend related meetings of this Committee.
  - (3) The Advisory Committee shall serve for the term of the Committees that constituted it.

#### **Article Four Management and Use of Finances**

- Section 25 The expenses of this Committee shall be the responsibility of the Standing Committee. Sources of funding are as follows:  
(1) Rents and income from church buildings and property,  
(2) Income from publication,  
(3) Donations;  
(4) Interest;  
(5) Other lawful income.
- Section 26 This Committee shall receive donations and contributions according to government regulations.
- Section 27 Committee expenditure must be within the scope of duties and for the development of work set by this constitution, monies cannot be apportioned to individuals.
- Section 28 This Committee shall establish a strict system of financial regulation, guaranteeing that its accounting practices are legal, honest, accurate and complete.
- Section 29 This Committee must provide professionally trained and certified accountants. Accountants cannot simultaneously receive and pay out monies. Accounting personnel must undertake to reconcile and oversee accounts. If accounting personnel are transferred or leave their jobs, transition formalities must be strictly enforced according to government regulations.
- Section 30 The financial management of this Committee must follow the government regulated financial management system, reporting income and expenses to the Standing Committee and the Plenary, and must accept oversight by the Chinese Christian National Conference and the auditing department.
- Section 31 Before a change in officers, or when changing the legal representative, there must be a financial audit by the related office of the registry of mass organizations and the department responsible for the work concerned. No unit or individual may occupy, take for personal use or misappropriate the property or funds of this Committee.
- Section 32 Wages and salaries, insurance and benefits for full-time employees of this Committee shall be based on the relevant government regulations for units and enterprises.

## **Article Five Revision of this Constitution**

- Section 33 Revisions to this Constitution must be passed by two-thirds of members present of the National Chinese Christian Conference.
- Section 34 Revisions to this Constitution must be reported to the office responsible for the work concerned and approved by the registry of mass organizations within 15 days of passage before they will take effect.

## **Article Six Addendum**

- Section 35 Dissolution and cessation of activities by this Committee must be carried out according to relevant government regulations.
- Section 36 This Constitution was approved at the Seventh National Chinese Christian Conference May 25, 2002.
- Section 37 The authority to interpret this Constitution lies with the incumbent Standing Committee. Section 38 This Constitution takes effect on approval by the related office of the registry of mass organizations.

*Tian Feng 8/2002: 6-8. The Chinese text governs.*

# **Constitution of the China Christian Council**

## **Article One General Principles**

- Section 1 This Council shall be known as the China Christian Council (CCC); together with the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China, known as the National Christian Offices (CCC/TSPM).
- Section 2 The CCC serves as the national organization for church affairs.
- Section 3 The CCC exalts Jesus Christ and his cross and unites all churches throughout China with Christ as our Head in developing together our role in building up the Body of Christ, so as to bear excellent witness to the Gospel of Christ; actively develops theological reconstruction; offers its services to the churches in performance of their ministry; upholds unified worship; advocates mutual respect in matters of faith and worship, and the spirit of "bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" in relationships among members.
- Section 4 The aim of the CCC is to unite and lead all patriotic and church loving Christians in China who believe in and serve God and who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord in glorifying God and benefiting people, to abide by the national Constitution, laws, regulations and policies, and to observe social mores; under the leading of the Holy Spirit, with one heart and unity of purpose, in obedience to the truth of Scripture, to uphold the Three-Self patriotic principle, to formulate and perfect the system of order of the Chinese Church, to make our Chinese Church an independent, self-run and well run Church and to enable Chinese Christianity to adapt to socialist society.
- Section 5 The CCC accepts lawful administration by the State Administration of Religious Affairs and regulation as a mass organization by the State Civil Administration Department.
- Section 6 This Council shall be based in Shanghai.

## **Article Two Scope of Duties**

- Section 7 The duties of the CCC are as follows:
- (1) To promote theological education and the training of personnel;
  - (2) To promote publication of the Bible, hymnals and other Christian books and periodicals;
  - (3) To actively promote theological reconstruction;
  - (4) To introduce and facilitate the exchange of experience in the areas of evangelism, pastoral work and management among local churches;
  - (5) To formulate rules and regulations for the church and oversee their application in the local church and promote formulation of such rules and regulations by provincial, autonomous region and directly-administered municipal Christian Councils (or Church Councils) in order to raise the standard of management in the churches;

- (6) To initiate friendly relationships between the government and regional churches;
- (7) The CCC serves to strengthen contacts with provincial, autonomous region and directly-administered municipal Christian Councils (or Church Councils), through channels of communication, exchange of experience, study and consultation on problems common to its counterparts at these levels.
- (8) The CCC shall join with the TSPM in convening the National Conference at prescribed intervals and may convene other joint meetings as the need arises,
- (9) The relationship between the CCC and the TSPM is one of cooperation with differentiation of function. The CCC coordinates with the TSPM to achieve the whole program of the work of Chinese Christianity:
- (10) It is the duty of Christian Council (or Church Councils) at the provincial, autonomous region and directly administered municipality level to observe and carry out the resolutions of the CCC. The CCC shall urge compliance and supervise in this regard

### **Article Three Structure of the Organization; Election and Removal of Officers**

- Section 8 The National Chinese Christian Conference is the highest body of this Council It is composed of delegates recommended by Christian Councils (or Church Councils) and Three-Self Committees at the provincial, autonomous region and directly administered municipality level Its duties are:
- (1) The drafting and/or revision of this constitution;
  - (2) Election of the members comprising the national committee of this Council,
  - (3) Consideration of the Work Report and the Financial Report of the outgoing Standing Committee,
  - (4) Discussion and determination of the guiding policies for the work of the incumbent Committee;
  - (5) Determination on other matters of importance.
- Section 9 A two-thirds majority of members must be present in order to convene the National Conference. Resolutions passed at the Conference take effect upon a minimum fifty percent affirmative vote of those present.
- Section 10 The National Chinese Christian Conference is jointly convened by the Standing Committees of the present CCC and TSPM. It shall meet every five years, but when need arises, may be convened earlier or postponed. This is a matter for decision by the Standing Committees; however, postponement shall be limited to one year. The number of delegates and the method of their election shall be jointly decided by the Standing Committees of the CCC and TSPM.
- Section 11 This Council shall be elected by the National Chinese Christian Conference. Term of office shall run until the following meeting of that Conference, with re-election leading to a further period of service. A two thirds majority of members must be present to convene a meeting of the

Council and a two thirds vote of members present is required to pass resolutions.

- Section 12 A plenary session of the national committee shall be convened every two years jointly by the Standing Committees of the CCC and TSPM, or earlier or later when necessary.
- Section 13 This Council shall consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, a General Secretary and members of the Standing Committee. An honorary President may be appointed.
- Section 14 The President, Vice-Presidents and General Secretary must possess the following qualifications:
- (1) Abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations and policies of the nation, and possess good political credentials;
  - (2) Enjoy a good reputation within the church;
  - (3) At the time of election, the ages of the President and Vice-Presidents shall not exceed 75 years, the General Secretary is a full-time position and the incumbent's age shall not exceed 65 years at the time of election.
  - (4) Good health and the ability to shoulder a normal workload;
  - (5) Shall not have a criminal record resulting in loss of political rights,
  - (6) Be capable of fully representing the Council in civil matters.
- Section 15 The President of this Council is the legal representative of the organization. A Vice-President or the General Secretary may serve as legal representative if this is so reported to the department responsible and approved by the relevant organization responsible for registry of mass social organizations. One serving as the legal representative of this Council shall not simultaneously serve in the same capacity for another organization.
- Section 16 The President, Vice-Presidents or General Secretary, if re-elected, shall continue to serve, but service shall not exceed two terms.
- Section 17 The national committee has the following duties:
- (1) Consideration of the Work Report of the Standing Committee,
  - (2) Discussion and oversight of the implementation of the guiding policies of the National Conference;
  - (3) Election and removal of the President, Vice-Presidents, General Secretary and members of the Standing Committee;
  - (4) When necessary, supplementary members may be added to the Standing Committee, or an honorary President may be named. These shall serve until the next National Christian Conference.
- Section 18 The Standing Committees are the administrative body of the National Christian Conference. When the full body is not in session, the Standing Committees handle the business of the National Conference.
- Section 19 The President shall, with the assistance of the Vice-Presidents and General Secretary, direct the work of the Standing Committee.
- Section 20 The responsibilities of the Standing Committee are:
- (1) Together with the Standing Committee of the TSPM, convene the National Chinese Christian Conference.
  - (2) Convene the plenary sessions of this Council;

- (3) Draft the Work Report of the Standing Committee, and invite consideration of same by the National Chinese Christian Conference or the Plenary Meeting of the CCC/TSPM;
- (4) Thoroughly carry out the guiding policies for work determined by the National Conference;
- (5) When necessary, recommend the co-option or withdrawal of committee members; those so co-opted shall serve until the next National Conference;
- (6) When its work requires, the Standing Committee, together with the Standing Committee of the TSPM, shall appoint working groups, or other specialized commissions, which can be adjusted or supplemented as necessary. These commissions shall work under the joint direction of the Executive Committees of the CCC and TSPM, and their respective General Secretary and Secretary-General. Their resolutions must be passed by a two-thirds majority and their term of office shall end with that of the Standing Committees which appoint them.
- (7) To determine other matters of importance.

Section 21 Two-thirds of the members must be present to convene a meeting of the Standing Committee. Resolutions must be passed with a two-thirds majority vote.

Section 22 Meetings of the Standing Committee shall be convened by the Executive Committee once per year; when necessary they may be held more often or postponed.

Section 23 The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the President, Vice-Presidents and General Secretary. The Executive shall deal with the important ongoing business of the Standing Committee, meeting every six months. When necessary, the CCC Executive Committee shall meet jointly with its TSPM counterpart.

Section 24 Associate General Secretaries shall be nominated by the General Secretary, subject to approval by the Standing Committee.

Section 25 Together with the TSPM, the CCC shall set up an Advisory Committee to facilitate access to the positive influence and potential of the older generation of those who have served as members in the past.

- (1) The Advisory Committee shall have two Directors, several Deputy Directors and members who shall be recommended by the Executive Committee of the National Conference and approved by the Plenary.
- (2) The duties of the Advisory Committee are: Submitting proposals and suggestions for the work of the committee; when necessary, they may be invited to attend related meetings of this Council.
- (3) The Advisory Committee shall serve for the term of the Committees that constituted it.

#### **Article Four Management and Use of Finances**

Section 26 The expenses of this Council shall be the responsibility of the Standing Committee. Sources of funding are as follows:

- (1) Rents and income from church buildings and property;
- (2) Income from publication;
- (3) Donations;
- (4) Interest;
- (5) Other lawful income.

- Section 27 This Council shall receive donations and contributions according to government regulations.
- Section 28 Council expenditure must be within the scope of duties and for the development of work set by this constitution; monies cannot be apportioned to individuals.
- Section 29 This Council shall establish a strict system of financial regulation, guaranteeing that its accounting practices are legal, honest, accurate and complete.
- Section 30 This Council must provide professionally trained and certified accountants. Accountants cannot simultaneously receive and pay out monies. Accounting personnel must undertake to reconcile and oversee accounts. If accounting personnel are transferred or leave their jobs, transition formalities must be strictly complied with according to government regulations.
- Section 31 The financial management of this Council must follow the government regulated financial management system, reporting income and expenses to the Standing Committee and the Plenary and must accept oversight by the Chinese Christian National Conference and the auditing department.
- Section 32 Before a change in officers, or when changing the legal representative, there must be a financial audit by the related office of the registry of mass organizations and the department responsible for the work concerned. No unit or individual may occupy, take for personal use or misappropriate the property or funds of this Council.
- Section 33 Wages and salaries, insurance and benefits for full-time employees of this Council shall be based on the relevant government regulations for units and enterprises.

#### **Article Five Revision of this Constitution**

- Section 34 Revisions to this Constitution must be passed by two-thirds of members present of the National Chinese Christian Conference. section
- 35 Revisions to this Constitution must be reported to the office responsible for the work concerned and approved by the registry of mass organizations within 15 days of passage before they will take effect.

#### **Article Six Addendum**

- Section 36 Dissolution and cessation of activities by this Council must be carried out according to relevant government regulations.
- Section 37 This Constitution was approved at the Seventh National Chinese Christian Conference May 25, 2002.

Section 38 The authority to interpret this Constitution lies with the incumbent Standing Committee

Section 39 This Constitution takes effect on approval by the related office of the registry of mass organizations.

*Tian Feng 8/2002: 9-1 1.* The Chinese text governs.

## **Fifth Standing Committee of the China Christian Council**

**Honorary President:** Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting)

**President:** Cao Shengjie\*

### **Vice-presidents:**

Fan Chengzhu	Su Deci
Lin Zhihua	Sun Xipei
Lu Mingyuan	Xiang Jianhua
Shen Cheng'en	

### **Standing Committee Members:**

An Xinyi	Song Jishu*
Bao jiayuan	Su Deci
Cao Shengjie*	Sun Bin
Chen Kewei	Sun Xipei
Chen Meilin*	Tang Weimin
Chen Yilu	Tong Ping'an
Fan Chengzu	Tong Yiqiang
Gao Ying*	Wang Zhenren
Gong Guangming	Wang Jun
Huang Chaozhang	Wang Peng*
Kan Baoping	Wang Weifan
Li Dong	Wei Kang
Lin De'en	Wu Wei
Lin Zhihua	Xiang Jianhua
Lu Mingyuan	Xu Weiyu
LO Dezhi	Xue Lianxi
Luo Zesheng	Yao Zengyi*
Mao Yangsan	Yu Jianrong
Qin Fengzhen*	Yu Wenliang
Shen Cheng'en	Yu Xinli
Shen Guangwei	Zhou Rongmin*
Shi Qigui	

**Acting General Secretary:** Cao Shengjie\*

**Executive Associate General Secretary:** Chen Meilin\*

### **Associate General Secretaries:**

Bao jiayuan	Lu Dezhi
Chen Yilu	Yu Xinli
Kan Baoping	

*Note: Of the 43 members, 8 are women (\*=Ms.)*

**Seventh Standing Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Committee of Protestant Churches in China**

**Honorary Chair:** Ding Guangxun (K.H Ting)

**Chairperson:** Ji Jianhong

**Vice-Chairpersons:**

Chen Sunpeng	Hua Yaozeng
Deng Fucun	Jin Wei*
Gao Feng	Wu Chengrong

**Members:**

ChenSunpeng	Mei Kangjun
Chen Zemin	Meng Fanzhi
Deng Fucun	Ni Guangdao
Feng Hao	Shen Xuebin
Fu Xianwei	Su Weiyuan
Gan Liming*	Sun Jinwei
Gao Feng	Sun Zhaogui
Gao Zhongxiao	Tu Hangjiao
Hua Yaozeng	Wang Aiming
Ji Jianhong	Wang Bichang*
Jin Wei*	Wang Fuzeng
Jin Yunpeng	Wu Chengrong
Kou Youguo	Wu Jianyin
Li Congming	Xu Lunsheng
Li Hengquan	Xu Minghan
Li Hongyu	Xu Xiaohong
Liang Ming	Yan Zhiyuan
Liu Shengwen*	Yang Mingming*
Lu Jianming	Yue Qinghua
Luo Baoluo	Zhao Xuyao
Luo Liguang	Zhao Yuanhao
Ma Jianhua*	Zhao Zhi'en

**Acting Secretary General:** Ji Jianhong

**Executive Associate Secretary General:** Mei Kangjun

**Associate Secretary Generals:**

Fu Xianwei	Xu Xiaohong
Jin Yunpeng	Zhang Keyun
Ni Guangdao	

*Note: Of the 44 members, 6 are women. (\* = Ms.)*

## Chinese Christian CCC/TSPM Advisory Committee

**Directors:** Luo Guanzong, Han Wenzao

### **Vice-Directors:**

Chen Zemin  
Fan Xiuyuan  
Liu Nianfen\*  
Shen Derong

Shi Zesheng  
Wang Juzhen\*  
Wu Ai'en  
Zheng Yugui

### **Members:**

Chen Zemin  
Fan Xiuyuan  
Gao Chongsheng  
Gao Jianguo  
Han Bide  
Han Wenzao  
Helian Zhaoxuan  
Hua Changji  
Kong Yuehan  
Li Ming  
Liang Baoluo  
Ling Jiyun  
Liu Nianfen\*  
Lu Zhibin\*

Luo Guanzong  
Shen Derong  
Shi Zesheng  
Wang Huairan  
Wang Juzhen\*  
Wang Shengcai\*  
Wu Ai'en\*  
Xu Changtai  
Xu Rulei  
Yang Zhouhuai  
Yu Yaokun  
Zhang Zhongxin  
Zheng Yugui  
Zhu Faqing

*Note: Of the 28 members, 5 are women (\*=Ms)*

## **Biographical Sketch of Rev. Cao Shengjie and Elder Ji Jianhong**

### ***Rev. Cao Shengjie, President, China Christian Council***

Elected at the 7th National Chinese Christian Conference, May 2002.

Born in 1931 into a third-generation Christian family, Rev. Cao graduated from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1953, after which she served as an evangelist in St. Peter's Church and Grace Church, both in Shanghai. In 1962, she became Secretary of the Chinese Christian three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. During the Cultural Revolution era (1966-1976), she was sent to work in a factory. In 1979, she joined the Religious Studies institute of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) as an assistant researcher, a post she kept until 1986. In 1980, with the formation of the China Christian Council, she began serving as its Associate General Secretary, as well as Chief Editor of the *New Hymnal*. Ordained in 1988, Rev. Cao then began serving as a Vice-President of the CCC. She has been active in women's work, in drafting the Chinese Christian Church Order and in the study of self-propagation.

In addition to the Presidency of the CCC, she is also Vice President of the National YWCA of China and Vice-Head of the Society of Religious Studies in Shanghai.

She is married to Rev. Xu Minghan, an Associate General Secretary of the TSPM, and Vice-Principal of China Eastern Seminary. Rev. Cao has a son and a grandson.

### ***Elder Ji Jianhong, Chairperson, National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China***

Elected at the Seventh National Chinese Christian Conference, May 2002.

Elder Ji was born into a Christian family in 1932 and attended church-run primary and secondary schools. In 1951 he became Executive Secretary of the Nanjing Three-Self Committee. He entered Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1952, assisting at Christian Assembly (Little Flock) gatherings while studying. On graduation in 1956, he began to serve these gatherings formally. In 1959 he was in charge of ministry at St. Paul's Church (Taiping Road) in Nanjing. During the Cultural Revolution era, he was sent down to do manual labor in the countryside from October 1969 to 1979. In October 1979, he was brought back to Nanjing to prepare for the re-opening of the church and the resumption of church ministries.

Since 1980, he has served the Church in Jiangsu, first as a staff member, then as Associate General Secretary and later as Vice-Chairperson of the Jiangsu TSM. Going on to serve concurrently as Associate General Secretary and Vice-Chairperson, he was then elected Chairperson of the organization.

Since 1996, he has also served as Vice-Chairperson of the national TSPM, Head of the Commission on Church Administration, Managing Director of the Board of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Jiangsu Bible School.

Elder Ji is married to Wu Chaoxing, a graduate of Hujiang University in Shanghai who pursued graduate studies at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. Now retired, she has worked in the offices of the church magazine *Tian Feng*, and at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, first as a lecturer and later as secretary and deputy director in the President's office. Elder Ji has two sons.

Information provided by Amity News Service.

## **Closing Speech to the 7<sup>TH</sup> National Chinese Christian Conference**

CAO SHENGJIE

By the grace of God, this 7th National Chinese Christian Conference comes to a successful conclusion today. Looking back on the meeting, several points stand out:

First, this is the first national Christian meeting to be held in the new century and forms a significant link between past and future. It has been the object of widespread attention and emphasis by colleagues and fellow Christians at home and abroad. This is obvious from the many letters and telegrams of congratulations that have been received. The prayers and support of our sisters and brothers were important in guaranteeing that this meeting would be a success.

Second, the direction of this meeting is clear. In the summing up made at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the TSPM in 2000, we formulated our basic goal of "running the church well according to the three-self principle." The duty of this meeting was to give substance to those goals. General Secretary Jiang Zemin's speech at the National Meeting on Religious Work held by the State Council in 2001 gave us a clearer understanding of the basic task in the religious work of Party and State, which was of great assistance to us in planning for a positive role. This role is to be unshakable in our resolution to help the Party and government thoroughly implement its policy of religious freedom, while at the same time safeguarding the legitimate rights of Christian circles; to go further in establishing the concept of the rule of law, making observance of the law a prerequisite in initiating religious activities; taking the initiative in adapting to socialist society; taking greater responsibility in upholding the principle of independence and self-determination. The speech given by Director Ye Xiaowen of the Religious Affairs Bureau at the opening formalities of this Conference drew on the realities of Christianity and gave us hope.

Third, the demands of our future work are fairly concrete. The Work Report of the outgoing Standing Committee underwent collective discussion and six revisions before being finalized. It raises basic demands and concrete duties for future work. Delegates' reactions have been marked by seeking truth from facts and many suggestions can be implemented. The Constitutions of the CCC and TSPM also underwent major revisions, assuring that these two bodies will be strengthened in structure and organization. Fourth, more has been done to ensure a greater proportion of younger delegates. There are 300 delegates at this meeting from all 30 provinces, autonomous regions and directly-administered municipalities. The 105 delegates under 40 are one-third of the total. One hundred twenty-nine delegates are in the 41-60 age range. Together with those under 40, these make up 78 percent of the total. This means that upwards of three-fourths of our delegates here are below 60 years of age, with the median age at 49.6, lower by three years than the median age at our last meeting. The proportion of women delegates - 26.9 percent - is also 1.1 percent higher than previously. Thus, the graying of Chinese Christianity has been slowed somewhat.

Fifth, the sense of unity has been strengthened. The enthusiasm throughout this meeting and the views expressed by delegates in the small groups and plenary show that a consensus lacking in past meetings has here been achieved on some large issues of principle. In his opening speech, Bishop Ting congratulated this meeting beforehand on being a united meeting, and today we can say that we have not disappointed him.

Let me list some of the issues discussed at the meeting:

Christianity must keep up with the times. In this third stage of the TSPM, it must firmly grasp the central work of theological reconstruction if it is to truly achieve adaptation to socialist society. Delegates showed a profound understanding of the fact that theological reconstruction is necessary to the very existence and development of the church. Socialist society is developing rapidly and we must witness to the unchanging truth of Christianity in an ever-changing era. On a ground of theological reconstruction we must have reasonable explanations and develop the peace, joy and encouragement that Christianity brings to people and renew and enliven content, thus enabling ever more people to know and accept it. In his opening speech, Bishop Ting once again pointed to the importance of developing Christian morality and this received a warm response from delegates. And, concerning the resolution on the Work Report of the Standing Committee, he further stressed that through the good works of Christians we must ensure that the slogan "a good Christian is a good citizen" becomes a reality. Delegates also pointed out that theological reconstruction is not mere empty theory, but is aimed at promoting self-propagation, raising the standard of preaching and enabling us to truly lead Christians on the path of integrating a firm faith with patriotism and love of church. In terms of theological reconstruction, we must both raise the level of theory and enable all Christians to enjoy its fruits. In this regard, we still have a great deal of work ahead of us.

Christianity has always stressed international relationships. In our situation of greater openness, on the foundation laid down for us by the older generation of church leaders, we will continue our efforts in this direction. At the same time, we lay full stress on the new situation and new problems that have followed reform and openness. Delegates at this meeting have raised many concerns about outside forces making use of Christianity to interfere in China; these are not only to be found outside the church, but inside as well. Many delegates expressed the idea that "the greater reform and openness, the more we must maintain independence and self-determination." This is a pertinent and necessary theme and we must intensify education in patriotism and three-self. Delegates also said that the only fundamental way to resist infiltration is "self-strengthening." On a foundation of doing the work of strengthening the church well, we must strengthen our determination to resist outside interference, raise our pastoral workers' awareness of independence and running the church well ourselves, while expanding communications to enable ordinary Christians to improve their powers of discernment in these matters.

We face a great enemy in the proliferation of heresy and cults. They do direct harm to many of our fine brothers and sisters, and do serious damage to the church and the society. A resolution "On Opposing Evil Cults and Resisting Heretical Beliefs" was passed during this meeting to deal with this situation. Delegates said that we are shepherds and watchers. We must do a good job of protecting the vineyards the Lord has entrusted to us, not letting the wolves in to do harm. At the same time, it was said that CC/TSMs at all levels must do more concretely to run the church well, those responsible for the churches must unite and management must be orderly in order to lead believers well.

If the national CCC/TSPM are to strive to accomplish the tasks described above, we must, when it comes down to it, rely on the CC/TSM at all levels, the local churches and our Christian colleagues. We must strengthen contact and communications, and do our work with one heart and unity of mind.

New committees and Standing committees were elected at this National Conference, and Elder Ji Jianhong and myself were elected as leaders of the TSPM and CCC respectively. We thank our colleagues for the trust placed in us; we also tremble, for the responsibility is great. Compared to past leaders of these two bodies, we find ourselves wanting, whether in spiritual attainments, knowledge or ability. But we take this responsibility as another instance of God's calling and we dare not refuse. We can only rededicate ourselves before God, and with the support of the leaders, and the guidance of our elders, Bishop Ting, Mr. Luo and Mr. Fan, pour our greatest efforts into the work before us. The CCC/ TSPM must strengthen themselves. The regulations of our church order are not for others, but are first of all meant to restrain us, the leaders. We resolve to place ourselves in the service of the whole church, to listen to the voices of believers, to proceed strictly according to our Constitutions, and strive to increase the coherence and effectiveness of the work of the CCC/TSPM. We sincerely request the prayers of delegates here and of colleagues and fellow Christians across the nation. Moreover, we ask that you ceaselessly regulate and supervise us, that we may from start to finish walk the path God points out to us.

We place our hopes for the future of the church in the hands of our young and middle-aged colleagues. There are many young people among the delegates to this Conference, some of whom already bear important responsibilities within the church. We hope you will be further tested and refined, that you will not rest content with what you have thus far achieved, but make further advances in your spiritual lives, in morality, in theological attainments, and especially in firm understanding of patriotism and love for the church. The times are beckoning you, and the church needs your services; whether or not you are fitted to be a worker the Lord can use, depends upon your own resolve and actions.

Our Conference here has received care and attention on many sides, support and substantive assistance from the leaders of the United Front Department of the Party Central Committee and the Religious Affairs Bureau. I would like to express heartfelt thanks on behalf of us all.

Now I declare this 77<sup>th</sup> National Chinese Christian Conference to have finished all aspects of its agenda and come to a satisfactory conclusion. May the grace of Jesus Christ remain with us all. Amen.

*Tian Feng, 8/2002: 14-16.*

## **The Current Situation in the Chinese Church**

CAO SHENGJIE

### **Achievements: God has done great things in China**

- a) The church is growing fast, especially in the last 20 years.

Statistics for 1999

15 million Christians-- more than 20 times the figure for 1949 (700,000).] 6,000 churches; 32,000 meeting points; 18 theological seminaries at different levels (national, regional, provincial). Each province also has its own local lay training projects. 28 million copies of the Bible have been printed, including Bibles in the languages of national minorities, Braille Bibles, etc. In recent years Bible production has averaged 2-3 million copies per year, making the Chinese Church one of the largest printers of Bibles in the world.

Much Christian literature has also been published. *Tian Feng* (Heavenly Wind), the church monthly magazine, has about 100,000 subscribers."

- b) The church is post-denominational. Prior to 1949, Chinese churches were divided among many denominations. Since 1958, Christians of different denominational backgrounds have come to worship together. Unity is much treasured and there is no existing denominational structure in China anymore.
- c) The church has a good relationship with the Chinese people. Our motto is "Be light and salt to the world; glorify God and benefit the people." Many churches and Christians bear beautiful witness to their faith by good behavior in society. More and more people, especially intellectuals, are sympathetic and supportive of the church.

### **Challenges:**

- a) Raising the spiritual quality of Christians. The majority of Chinese Christians are in the countryside. Due to low educational levels and the lack of trained ministers, many Chinese Christians do not have a thorough grasp of their faith. Some easily blend Christian faith with folk religion or superstitious practices. In some places heretical teachings and cults once prevailed. In one of these, called "Anointed King," the leader identified himself with Christ, being worshipped by his people and taking advantage of young girls. Another cult, "Eastern Lightning," proclaimed that Jesus had come again, this time as a woman.
- b) Finding new ways to illustrate and spread the Gospel well in a nation that has made great progress in science and culture. We believe people's spiritual need is permanent. Yet, if we cannot meet these needs properly, if our church is not run well, Christianity might not be built on a solid foundation.

- c) Responding to attacks from some Christian groups outside China. There are some Christian personnel and groups who spread rumors and misinformation about China and the Chinese Church. They also try to influence Christians in China against their own church and government with sayings such as "Hear God, not men," or "You will not be saved if you attend a church that follows the three-self principle." They prevent grassroots Christian communities from being registered (something every social organization should do to gain legal protection), and even support some illegal activities directly.

### **Insights over 50 years**

- a) Christians must identify ourselves with the Chinese people. A bit of historical background is in order: In 635 CE, Syrian Nestorian missionaries came to China. This was the earliest entry of Christianity, but Nestorianism vanished in China after some 200 years. In modern times, Christianity came to China following the Opium War (1840) along with western colonial expansion. Though some missionaries had lofty aims of spreading the Gospel and some did good for the Chinese people, on the whole, unfortunately, the missionary movement was involved in western imperialist aggression. There were missionaries who aided the opium trade, drafted the unequal treaties and even participated in military invasions. The churches they set up in China were controlled by foreign mission boards in finance and personnel. Therefore the Chinese Church was very much looked down upon in China itself as a "foreign religion." This was a great obstacle to the spread of the Gospel.

The Three-Self Movement (self-administration, self-support and self-propagation), initiated by Chinese Christian leaders, has greatly changed the image of the Chinese Church. This is the main reason why the church has grown so fast in recent years.

In ancient times, China was a country with a rich cultural tradition and strong central power. But after 1840, the Chinese people were greatly oppressed and humiliated by western powers, and this misery persisted until 1949. Christians shared the fate of their people. As a child in Shanghai, I remember seeing dead bodies in the street everyday as I walked to school during the winter months. They had died from cold and hunger. As Chinese, it was natural for us to support revolutionary change in our country. Nowadays, we Chinese have greatly raised our standard of living, though it is still low compared with many western countries. Our situation as Chinese Christians is like that of our fellow Chinese citizens. Without the policy of reform and opening to the outside world, we would not have been able to build so many churches in recent years.

We call on our Christians to be "good Christians and good citizens." This is common in all countries, but some western Christian leaders have condemned us on the grounds that our leading party, the Communist Party, is atheist. In 1949

I sometimes heard people in church circles say that the Communists would kill all religious believers when they took power. But this did not happen. The policy of religious freedom was set down in our Constitution in the 1950s. (During the Cultural Revolution the Constitution was not fully implemented, a calamity for the whole country, not only for religious circles. Thank God, this is all over.) In our experience and understanding, our government's goal is to unite people of different faiths and ethnic identities to build up our socialist country. We can unite with them politically in serving the Chinese people, while respecting each other's religious faiths. This is our stance of cooperation.

There is much talk in the West about "persecution" of Chinese churches. Where does this come from? I think these persecution myths come from four sources: 1) Outdated information from the so-called Cultural Revolution; 2) Intentional anti-China propaganda from prejudiced mass media; 3) Reports of cases which are actually illegal practices of foreigners or cult leaders (according to Decree 144 of the Chinese government, foreigners are free to worship in China, but not to evangelize or preach without an invitation from a Chinese church organization. Nor is it legal for them to organize any religious programs on their own, or to set up their religious organizations in China.); 4) Exaggeration or distortion of individual cases which are the result of wrong practices by certain officials who do not handle the policy of religious freedom well. These cases can be passed on to the government for redress and this the TSPM and CCC always do.

On the whole, I would say that in the last 20 years, the government has been doing a better, not a worse, job of implementing religious freedom.

We believe that by better uniting ourselves with the people, the church is moving ahead toward a bright future.

- b) The main task of the Chinese Church today is to build herself up based on the three self principle.

Our understanding of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) is the balance among "Go and make disciples of all nations," "baptizing them" and "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." That means, we not only pursue the increase of Christian numbers, but also help our church members to be pleasing children of the Lord and to commit themselves to Him. We are doing evangelism through many forms, e.g., evangelistic meetings, music programs, personal witness, etc., but we also focus on pastoring. Without this building up, the church cannot be built on the rock of Jesus Christ, and evangelism cannot be carried on successfully.

The Chinese Church has her own historical background and current context. In some areas, we have some conditions different from churches in other countries. For instance, post-denominational practice is possible in China because 1) denominations were the product of western churches, and were brought to China

by missionaries. Chinese Christians happen to have joined some denominational churches, but were less influenced by denominationalism. 2) On the way to developing the Three-Self Movement, Christians of different denominations found out that we have so much in common in the dimension of faith and we can cooperate well. 3) While seeking the common ground, we still respect each other's differences in ritual practice (Worship on Sunday/ the Sabbath, baptism by sprinkling or immersion, Holy Communion in different forms, etc.), and most of our Christians are happy with that.

The essence of three-self is to develop our own selfhood, that is to act according to the guidance of God alone, to adapt ourselves to our society, and to go our own way, not copying others' patterns.

In the process of building up our church, the three-self principle means: 1) Insistence on the Chinese Church's independence and sovereignty; 2) the dual love for our country and for our church; 3) unity among Christians and with the people; 4) doing our church work well, i.e., running the church well, supporting well, propagating the Gospel well. We are seeking and exploring and praying for the fresh guidance of the Holy Spirit.

- c) The importance of theological reconstruction. It is quite natural for a mature church to have her own theological reflection. Bishop K.H. Ting says, "Theology is the church in the act of thinking." But in the past, when the Chinese Church was a mission field, we accepted the Gospel according to the theological explanation of the missionaries only. Coming into the new society, we found that some of these did not fit our environment and experience. For instance, the sort of exegesis of the passages about Noah's three sons (Gen. 9:20-28) that says black people are descendents of Canaan and therefore it is God's will that they be slaves, while Japheth represents white people, who have the right to live in the tents of people of color. I am surprised to know this was what some missionaries said in Africa. This arises from racial discrimination, but some Christians teach it as if it were biblical truth.

Another interpretation says that each day of the six days of God's creation of the world stands for one thousand years. This would mean the history of the universe is only six thousand years, something we know is not true according to geological science. Many doomsday claims were made for the year 2000 (the end of a six-thousand-year history). Many heresies pick up some single term or passages from the Bible to support wrong teachings. If we do not study the Bible ourselves, we can be easily misled.

We believe that the Bible is revelation from God, the highest authority of faith. Our faith, based on the tenets of the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, will never change. But as human beings, our understanding is limited. Our understanding of God's attributes, the meaning of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit always needs to be deepened and intensified with time, and

sometimes varies in different contexts. Paul says, "O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 12:33). We really wish to enrich our understanding of God through the reconstruction of theological thinking, and the abundance of God's truth will be revealed.

This is nothing to do with the demarcation between evangelicals or liberals. In China, there is no typical representation of either school. In joining in the Three-Self Movement together, even though Christians have different theological backgrounds, all have gained some new inspiration. We all need to study the Bible in our situation under the light of the Holy Spirit, in order to explain clearly and properly the truth of Jesus to contemporary Chinese people.

Our theological thinking will be based on biblical teaching, historical church tradition and our unique experience of the church and our culture. We hope our efforts will help in the all-round upbuilding of our church and make some contribution to the church universal.

### **Some wishes for our foreign friends**

Three-self is by no means self-isolation. As a part of the church universal, the Chinese Church still has to learn from Christians and churches in other parts of the world. We treasure the friendship and fellowship built on genuine Christian love and partnership on an equal basis. To reach this goal, let us proceed along the right path.

- 1) Mutual understanding is the priority. Since we live in different historical, social and cultural conditions, diversity in church-building and social outlook is quite possible. In order to respect each other and find the best way of showing loving concern, we need to understand each other better. I hope visits from friends overseas will help more Christians abroad know the real situation in China. When the Chinese Church is targeted by misunderstandings, we need the prayers and support of friends overseas.
- 2) We abide by Chinese law and wish our friends to respect Chinese law and regulations as well. Honesty is the prerequisite for true friendship. I hope all exchanges will be done in honesty, openness, sincerity and legality. Never do anything secretly, not to say illegally. Some people speak in a friendly way, but half-secretly support some illegal activities detrimental to the interests of the Chinese Church and Chinese people. This will have no positive effect.
- 3) Cooperative projects may be set up according to the needs of the Chinese Church and the possibilities of our counterparts. As we run our church independently, I would first mention the needs of the Chinese Church. We receive offerings without strings attached. Please be sensitive to giving up those old mission ideas; i.e., some outsiders think that only they can evangelize China or lead the Chinese Church. They should know that God has been using the local churches and native Chinese to accomplish God's will. Friends are sometimes

invited to help, yet they are not asked to do anything in place of Chinese Christians.

I have tried to speak very frankly in line with biblical teaching, "Speaking the truth in love." I believe only with mutual respect and sincere cooperation can the friendship and fellowship among us be enhanced and developed over time.

\*Additional statistics for 1999:

Ordained clergy: 3,000+, or 1 per 5,000 Christians

Lay workers: 70,000

Number of new Christians per year in Shanghai: 6,000

Rev. Cao delivered this briefing to the "China Symposium" sponsored by China Partner on December 10, 2001.

## **Faith's Journey:**

Foreword to *Love Never Ends*

CHEN ZEMIN

It is a great pleasure as well as an honor for me to read all of the selections in *Love Never Ends* before the volume went to press. I have known Bishop Ting since 1939, during the early days of the war against Japan. He had graduated from St. John's University in Shanghai and was serving as a Student Secretary in charge of student work with the Shanghai YMCA. I was studying in Shanghai University at the time and during the summer vacation I was assigned to do field work in the Shanghai Y, where he was my advisor. A hard worker, diligent in study, poised and dignified, but enthusiastic and affable as well, he made a deep impression on me. Later I studied at Nanjing Theological Seminary, which had moved to Shanghai during the war. Bishop Ting had received his B.D. from St. John's, and was serving as pastor of the Church of Our Savior of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui (The Chinese Anglican Church) and the Shanghai Community Church. He frequently came to Nanjing Seminary library to read and borrow books, and I often went to Community Church to hear him preach. At that time nearly half of China had fallen into the hands of the Japanese, and Shanghai was cut off like an "isolated island." In that difficult and dangerous environment, he was earnest in his pastoral care among church members and students, while at the same time continuing conscientious research in theology. I knew him as a man who did theology not by fleeing reality for some theological ivory tower, ignoring the world while pursuing his own academic and moral cultivation, but rather by seeking ways in which Christian faith and teaching could be combined with the cause of national salvation and social transformation. This was reflected in his frequent admonition to students when he became Principal of the Seminary: "In doing theology, one should not distance oneself from political reality; sometimes theology is more subtle politics."

After victory over the Japanese, Bishop Ting was invited to be a secretary of the Canadian Student Christian Movement, where he made friends with some progressive Western Christians (see "In Memory of Rev. Alan Eccleston," the Foreword to the new edition of *Christian Missions and the Judgement of God* and "In Memory of Rev. Edward Hewlitt Johnson"). He did graduate studies at Columbia University and Union Seminary in New York, where he gained a deeper appreciation of theology as an ideology and worldview that might serve either progressive or reactionary politics. From 1948-51, he served as a secretary of the World Student Christian Federation in Geneva, where some of his colleagues were progressives sympathetic to the Chinese revolution. This happened to be at the very time of the Liberation War in China, when Chinese Christianity was facing a life and death choice whether to follow the progressive path of patriotism, or to shore up the backward forces of reaction. Many prominent Western Christians, with their anti-Soviet, anti-Communist prejudices, were harsh in their assessment of the new China, but Bishop Ting paid no heed to the "well-intentioned" advice of "friends." He and his wife, Siu-may Kuo, returned with their son to Shanghai, where he became involved in the Christian anti-imperialist patriotic movement and headed up the Christian Literature Society as General Secretary.

In 1951, as the Chinese Christian patriotic movement further developed and intensified, 12 Protestant theological seminaries in east China joined together to become Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, with Bishop Ting as Principal, a post he has held right up to the present. In the over 40 years I have been privileged to work with him, I have learned a great deal under his guidance; in particular, how to work in the church, do theology and carry on theological education in the complicated environment of socialist new China. For several decades he has been a true leader of Protestant Churches in China (as Chairperson of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and President of the China Christian Council from 1980-1997, both positions he retired from with the titles of Honorary Chairperson and Honorary President, January 1, 1997). From 1979 to the present, he was Vice-President of Nanjing University and Head of the Center for Religious Studies, Nanjing University. He was Vice-Chairperson of the 5th and 6th Jiangsu Provincial People's Political Consultative Conference, and a Vice-Chairperson of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8th and 9th National People's Political Consultative Conference. In this past nearly half century, while busily engaged in a variety of church activities, academic research and educational work, as well as social and political activities, he has written a number of important essays, some of which have been published (eight appear in *Theological Writings from Nanjing Seminary*, and several of these are included here), while many have been lost. Included in this volume are some 80 pieces selected and edited by the Bishop himself. With the exception of six earlier ones, all are post-Cultural-Revolution works, most of which are published here for the first time. Bishop Ting is a man of strong commitment, lofty ideals and great enterprise. As a Christian leader of China, his life has been closely linked with the destiny of the Chinese Church. What he had probed and pondered during different periods and phases in the past half century reflected the problems, challenges and responses of the Chinese Church. In a sense, his quests and thought in religious issues are reflections of the church's deliberation on her destiny and future during these periods. Hence the publication of this volume is of great historical significance and relevance to the Church in China.

Bishop Ting has also written many essays in English, some of which have been newly translated into Chinese for this collection (referring to the Chinese edition-ed.). Some have been published in English overseas, such as those in *No Longer Strangers: Selected Writings of Bishop K.H. Ting* (Raymond Whitehead, ed., Orbis Books, 1989) and in the *Chinese Theological Review* (published by the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia). Volume 10 (1995) of the *Chinese Theological Review* was a festschrift honoring Bishop Ting's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and included many essays by friends at home and abroad. Bishop Ting is a well-known figure in world Christianity, recognized as the main spokesman for and theologian of contemporary Chinese Christianity. This collection of his writings has been made for readers in Christian and academic circles in China. An English edition is being published simultaneously by the Yilin Press.

The contents of the volume can be classified by subject matter as follows: 1) speeches made during overseas visits; 2) religious policy and religious studies, 3) Three-Self and

running the church well; 4) theological lectures and sermons, 5) memorials, congratulations, prefaces, etc.

Since the Third Plenum (1978) of the Eleventh Congress of the CPC, the Party and government have been summing up their historical experience-correct and incorrect in religious questions, clarifying the Party's basic viewpoint and policy, and rectifying the errors of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Bishop Ting, as a member of the Commission on Constitutional Revision of the National People's Congress, was involved in the 1982 revision of the Constitution. In three articles in this volume Bishop Ting explicates the United Front policy and religious policy of the Party according to his own understanding. This is the foundation and basis of religious work and church work in the new period of opening-up and reform. In the field of academic studies of religion, there was also a need to eradicate the influence of extreme leftist thought and to return to order. Up until the mid-eighties, there was a debate among Chinese academic circles on the so-called "Third Opium War." Some people had maintained a rigid stance insisting on the concept of "religion as opiate." Bishop Ting took an active part in this debate, opposing this view on scientific and historical grounds, and with an attitude of seeking truth from facts, giving a balanced critique of the notion that "religion is the opiate of the people." He put forward the view that the rich moral and ethical content of religion can be brought into harmony with socialism. Two longer pieces included here, "Recent Developments in the Study of Religion" (with Wang Weifan) and "An Introduction to *Religion under Socialism in China*" can serve as summaries of this debate. Since then, there has been much more mutual understanding and common language and friendship between religious and academic circles. We are very pleased to see that old taboos have been broken and great successes scored in the study of religion in China today.

In the past 20 years, Bishop Ting has devoted most of his time and energy to the work of building up the Chinese Church. The focus of his work during these years has been on maintaining the correct direction of Three-Self patriotism, strengthening and developing the achievements of Three-Self, bringing Three-Self patriotism to bear fruits in making the Chinese church well-run and effecting the transition from "three-self" (self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating) to "three well" (well-governed, well-supported and doing the work of propagation well). Following the further implementation of the religious policy nationwide, the Chinese Church has developed very rapidly and the number of believers and church organizations has multiplied. Because pastoral care of believers and education work has not been able to keep pace with this growth, many problems and difficulties have arisen in local churches. In some places the understanding and implementation of religious policy by local cadres has been problematic. Some problems also exist within the church in terms of understanding and practice in the areas of enlarging unity and making the church well-run. Chinese Christianity is in a "post-denominational" stage that began in 1980 with the establishment of the China Christian Council. The "two bodies," the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of Protestant Churches in China (est. 1954) and the China Christian Council, form the national "patriotic organizations" of the Chinese Protestant Church, and function to guide thinking, organization and church administration. Bishop

Ting, a man of lofty and penetrating vision and great openness of heart, has made important proposals on mutual respect according to the three-self principle (in doctrine, liturgy and church polity), enlarging unity, "re-ordering the relationship" and running the church well. He advocates seeking greater unity with those church bodies which are not associated with the Three-Self organization by relying on love, service and understanding. In the ten pieces included here that deal with these subjects, his magnanimity, sincerity and earnestness are evident.

Upwards of half the essays in this collection, in content and length, are theological. Over 30 of these were originally intended as sermons. Bishop Ting has always had a very high regard for self-propagation and theological studies. "Theology is the church in the act of thinking. A church that does not think is stagnant and dogmatic; it is a prison of the spirit. A religion that does not speak of theology is crude and primitive. A religion which does not apply reason to problems is unreasonable." The kind of theological thinking Bishop Ting advocates is one which considers how to bring faith and the realities of life together, a theory both rational and with transcendent power. It is neither the mysterious and abstruse subjectivity of the scholastics nor the preserve of "professional theologians" shut away in their studies. In one essay he writes of the "theological mass movement" of Chinese Christianity in the early 1950s, a time when the masses of believers themselves raised many theological questions which still have great significance today.

Bishop Ting has on many occasions spoken of the relationship between the ecumenicity (universality) and localness (particularity) of Christianity. He proposed that the Chinese Church should have its own theology. At the present stage, "Our theology has as a matter of course been constrained by history and the universal church, but it is not a copy, it is the thinking of Chinese Christians ourselves about the problems of the Chinese Church." At present we have not yet constructed or proposed a comparatively systematic or complete theology. We begin with the reality of where we are, and attempt to bring together Christian faith, traditional Chinese culture and special ethnic characteristics. Chinese society today is changing rapidly in a time of openness and reform. We must not raise demands for systematization prematurely in doing "contextualized theology," for, if we do, we will fall into the old ways of plagiarizing or aping traditional Western theology. For decades, from reading the Bible to faith in practice, Chinese Christianity has indeed seen much "new light," and has been engaged in doing theology. In many essays in this volume, Bishop Ting offers valuable, creative views of a breakthrough nature on fundamental theological issues, and selects concepts from modern Western theology for our consideration, adapting it for our use. All this can serve as guides for the future development of Chinese theology. For example, with regard to the Bible (See "Chinese Christians' Approach to the Bible") he refers to the fruits of contemporary Western biblical studies, avoiding pedantic debates and dogmatic "biblicism" of the quoting-out-of-context type. In accord with Chinese Christians' fervent love of the Bible and respect for biblical authority, he convincingly lays down a "biblical foundation" for a whole range of theological theses. In considering our concept of God (see "God is Love," "One Chinese Christian's View of God," etc.) he attests that God's most essential attribute is love; other attributes, such as holiness and righteousness,

derive from this love which created all things and embraces all things. He disperses the metaphysical fog and avoids the logical contradictions of traditional Western theology, enhancing the sense of human feeling and warmth, which makes these ideas more easily understood and accepted by Chinese people. His Christology posits the "Cosmic Christ" as an extension of "God is Love," absorbing the "process theology" of Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary thinking, taking creation, providence, redemption and sanctification of the cosmos to its ultimate consummation, all as the whole process of God's work through Christ. He bypasses the thousand-year-old controversy around the Chalcedonian definition of the perfect deity and perfect humanity of Christ, and corrects the one-sidedness and narrowness of dwelling solely on his work of redemption in traditional Christology. In theological study, there have long been two different approaches: creation-centered and redemption-centered. The former is usually more open and can easily accommodate all sorts of progressive thought and social changes, while the latter is often susceptible to a narrow exclusivism. In "Creation and Redemption," Bishop Ting handles this question very well, alerting us to and providing a corrective for the tendency in Chinese churches today to stress redemption while undervaluing creation. On human nature, Bishop Ting points to the concept in Chinese culture of the "innate goodness of human nature." He contrasts this with the Christian concept of original sin, reminding us that "humans are made in the image of God," and are "unfinished creations of God," "co-workers with God in the work of creation," while also pointing out the necessity of God's saving grace and emphasizing the possibility of human responsibility and development.

I cannot elaborate all these at length here. But these brief indications can be used as the loci to construct a theological system - a *loci theologici*. If we substantiate and connect these loci, it is not difficult to glimpse the framework of a new system of Chinese theology. Bishop Ting explains his points brilliantly in compelling and easily understood language, more appealing to people than abstruse theological jargon. Further, in many of his essays, he writes of how we are to deal with all the truth, goodness and beauty we encounter outside Christianity. What about atheists? Or the teaching that "believers cannot be yoked together with unbelievers?" He provides answers to these perplexing questions. At the same time he introduces current topics in international theological circles, such as the movement for unity in the ecumenical church, international peace and social justice, liberation theology, feminist theology, eco-theology, etc., all of which serve to broaden theological students' horizons. This volume enlivens theological reflection, challenges theological construction in the Chinese Church and clarifies the way forward. Its publication is a significant milestone in the history of Chinese theology and should be required reading for Chinese theological students.

In the last decade or so, Chinese intellectual circles have become more open toward the study of religion and theology than at any other time. Many friends outside the church have expressed understanding and sympathy toward Christianity. They have even contributed to the field in translating, writing and publishing many high quality works related to Christian theology. These make theological studies in the church, or the sermons preached from the pulpit, seem backward and conservative in comparison.

Many intellectuals have been unwilling to be in touch with or to be involved in the church for this reason. Bishop Ting coined the phrase "culture Christians" to describe these people, and although both within and outside the church there are still differing understandings and critiques of this issue, it is an expression of faith which should engender a positive response. Those of us within the church should ponder how to actively raise our own level, liberate our thinking, find a more common language with intellectuals in general, and encourage dialogue. These are issues that touch on whether Christianity in China will be able to break the bonds of being seen as a "sub-culture" and move forward together with all Chinese people. I hope the publication of this book will be noted and welcomed by intellectuals and help them to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese Christianity today.

In K.H. Ting, *Love Never Ends*. Nanjing: Win Press, 2000, 1-8.

Dr. Chen Zemin retired from his positions as Vice-Principal and Professor of Systematic Theology at Nanjing Seminary in 2002. He is a Vice-Director of the TSPM/CCC Advisory Committee and a member of the 7th Standing Committee of the TSPM.

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**Bishop K. H. Ting's *Love Never Ends* is available from:  
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## **"Jesus is Christ" as the Basis for Efforts at Indigenization and Contextualization in the Chinese Church**

KAN MOPING

Theological discussion is a present historical discussion, for faith is existential and theology is historical. Heidegger held that faith is a way of being in history and theology is the science of history.<sup>1</sup> Thus theological discussion that is related to believers' existence must be undertaken in the historical present. The current state of the Chinese Church is not simply that of a product of Christian history, but is related to world history as well. An understanding of the current state of the Chinese Church and of the current state of development of theology within it must be intentionally undertaken within history. If we elect to speak of it in isolation, our conclusions can hardly be related to the current state of the church in China or to efforts to indigenize the Chinese Church and contextualize Chinese theology.

Issues of indigenization and contextualization have come to seem like platitudes. There has been a lot of discussion of these issues over the last twenty years, but definitions have quite often been confused. Perhaps it is necessary to differentiate somewhat between the two, so that the discussion can proceed as meaningfully as possible. Roughly, indigenization is applied to the mode of church expression, and contextualization refers to the construction of theological thinking. Of course the boundary between the two cannot be absolutely clear, but the two definitely differ in meaning.

We must begin by explaining that indigenization is not inculturation. Quite the contrary, the inculturation of Christianity is the effort to transform Christianity into cultural Christianity. This poses a threat to Christianity, because cultural Christianity is a cultural expression of Christianity, not a Christian expression of culture. Indigenization is a cultural issue whose task is to enable Chinese Christianity to take root in traditional Chinese culture.<sup>2</sup> This point is extremely important for the Chinese Church, because there is a tendency to want to build the Chinese Church on so called "Christian culture" which is in essence a western cultural foundation. The result of this would be to make Chinese Christianity into a product of western culture. Only by identifying with the Chinese cultural tradition can Chinese Christianity better express itself in a Chinese cultural environment and play a role in the development of the Chinese cultural tradition.

Contextualization is a theological effort. Its task is to develop Chinese Christian theology in the Chinese context and oppose making a theology from another context the standard for theological praxis in the Chinese Church. It stresses that Chinese Christian theology must have its feet solidly planted in the Chinese context. Contextualization is a way to understand the present state of things historically, including the present cultural, political, economic and other conditions. It can link the past to the present and the present to the future. But contextualization is not localization, for localization is a narrow concept. Contextualization opens up the local to the world in this historical present. Because of this, contextual theology is not closed, but open. It is historical and not short-sighted or utilitarian.

It is not my object in this essay to discuss historical issues, but rather, through an analysis of several models of church indigenization and theological contextualization to explore, in the consciousness of this present historical moment and in the Chinese context, the trends in these two areas, and to offer two practical models for the Chinese Church.

## 1 Models of Indigenization

The demand for indigenization of the Christian church in China was raised in the last century and some Chinese church figures made many attempts to carry it through. Their efforts can be incorporated in the models below according to the methods employed.

The ***classical culture model*** involves using classical documents in our reading and interpretation of the Bible, or applying classical cultural forms—old rituals from traditional culture, old cultural concepts, or even old linguistic forms. But these efforts possess special features of traditional Chinese culture in form only. In substance, they are simply a restoration and end by making it even more difficult to express modern people's faith in Christian forms. The Renaissance thinking that returned to the classics was not a restoration, but a discovery of inspiration in the classics to address the hesitation of the contemporary church. Xie Fuya was a pioneer in this. His style gives the reader the sense of the traditional eight-part essay format being used to break its own bounds

Being native-born does not make something indigenous; indigenization is the process of engaging in cultural reflection within the Chinese cultural tradition. The Little Flock is a home-grown Chinese sect whose forms of expression make it distinct from other sects. Superficial examples would be a ban on women preaching and the absence of an ordained clergy. These customs are not from Chinese culture, however, but are examples of direct appropriation of Christian faith practices from New Testament culture joined to a foreign congregational church order. The Jesus Family, another sect, is particularly marked by this way of doing things, even though it, too, is heavily colored by the feudalism of the old Chinese culture. These practices are not indigenous, because they are not a result of cultural reflection taking place within the Chinese cultural tradition.

With the changes in China's economic structure, culture has changed, as have language and its connotations. It is very difficult to express the faith of people today using traditional language with its fixed linguistic connotations. What is more, due to the intensification of ethnic consciousness that has come with economic development, the public ethos cannot bear a return to the cultural and political environment that brought such humiliation to the Chinese people, but desires to infuse Chinese culture with new vitality in this new period of opportunity. Thus the classical culture model has a very limited role to play in indigenization efforts in the Chinese Church.

Rev. He Shiming of Hong Kong devoted his life to indigenization. "It is my profoundly held belief that Christian faith should enter into Chinese culture, and that Chinese culture should accept Christian faith. If this does not happen, however, it will not be easy for Christian faith to plant its roots firmly in the spirit of Chinese culture, nor will it be easy for the spirit of Chinese culture to have a glorious future."<sup>3</sup>

His emphasis here makes gospel and culture two fundamentals, because he is exploring how to make two conflicting entities mutually complementary. Thus he must use the **comparative model** to compare Chinese cultural concepts with the specific concepts of the Bible, and identify points of commonality, or the strengths and weaknesses of each.<sup>4</sup> This model compares Chinese culture and biblical culture, but the problem is that comparison of two cultural notions is in itself uneven, for reasons of cultural extent.

First, there is the issue of a culture's historical extent. The development of religious life is the result of cultural development, but the comparison mentioned above transcends the process of cultural formation, ignoring the culture's development in history making cultural features into constant cultural properties. It has been pointed out that if we do not know how religious life began and took shape in history, all other issues in religious studies will have nothing to consider.<sup>5</sup> The development of culture is both limited and influenced by its environment. Setting aside the process of cultural formation and looking only at specific abstract cultural concepts severs links to the history and environment in which that formation took place, leaving the concept empty and without significance. If we compared the features of the Jewish and Greek cultures of the Bible with those same cultures today, we would easily find points of dissonance. Simply to undertake a comparison between present cultural concepts and past ones is a task for neither our present Chinese culture, nor for the indigenization of our Chinese Church. Our present cultural task is how to understand past cultural notions today, and find inspiration within them for our real-life cultural practice. The task for indigenization of our Chinese Church at present is to achieve indigenization in the Chinese cultural tradition. I will deal specifically with this question below.

Another issue is that of the extent of cultural geography. The same cultural concept will always have different connotations in different cultures. He Shiming, in comparing filiality in the Bible with filiality in Chinese culture was comparing two things that could not actually be compared, for their connotations were widely different. There is a great difference between Chinese culture and the Hebrew and Greek cultures of the Bible. Tertullian's comparison of Jerusalem and Athens illustrates the essential lack of relationship between Christianity and the non-Christian Mediterranean cultures of the time-the distance between them was like the physical distance between contemporary Jerusalem and Athens. Thus, in these two senses, the comparative model has no practical service to offer indigenization in the church today.

The **ethical model** attempts to shape a set of doctrines with a strong ethical coloration from traditional Chinese ethical thinking and similar ideas in the Bible. This model has points in common with the comparative model, that is, the issue of cultural extent. The

Chinese cultural tradition was a continuous development. If we take its old ethical thinking and sever its ties with today's developments, this is still cultural restoration propped up by old cultural notions. The result is to make cultural features, rather than the Bible, into the basis of faith. In the gospels, the limits on faith that Jesus makes such great efforts to break through are precisely the limits imposed by these cultural notions.

The moral demands of the Bible cannot be ignored, but the issue lies in how to understand the moral demands Jesus makes. In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (John 3: 1-8), Nicodemus' misgivings include moral ones: he is old, how can he avoid moral debt? Jesus' demand is: be born from above. To be born from above is a moral demand, but one that transcends a mere individual ethical standpoint and makes personal moral behavior into a part of the renewal of the whole person. If Christianity is concerned only with issues of personal ethics, then it ignores its primary task of spiritual renewal. Again, Christian ethics does not function to put Christian doctrine on an ethical footing. It is moral doctrine that has ethics as its basis, and this is insufficient to make it into religious doctrine.

The **renewal model** seeks to use Christianity to rebuild a kind of Christian culture, including building up Christian ethics, or using a so-called "Christian culture" to transform the cultural tradition of a place. But the "Christian culture" meant here is in essence western culture. This is a way of bringing in western culture to replace the local culture. There are problems of definition with the concept of "Christian culture" itself, because there is no "Christian culture" which can exist independently in some concrete cultural form. The renewal model sets local culture and gospel in opposition to each other, in fact making western culture a prerequisite for the gospel.

David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen hold that when Third World theologians attempt indigenization, these attempts are a threat to the church: "The mentality of those non-Christian cultures could, for example, influence the theologian and lure him to reject as European fundamental and non-negotiable elements of the gospel. Since European theologians have already struggled through similar issues, European theology can provide practical help to prevent syncretistic patterns from damaging the whole church."<sup>6</sup>

It is obvious that they begin by denying the value of Third World cultures, setting local culture in opposition to the gospel, and viewing it as basically unchristian. They take certain aspects of European culture as facets of faith that are non-negotiable. Efforts at indigenization become attempts at syncretism. They see the European church as the mother church and hold that its guidance of Third World churches is absolutely necessary. This is a reflection of Euro-centric thinking. Winfried Gluer, in his study of the theology of T.C. Chao, critiques such thinking, saying that of the first attempts by Chinese theologians at indigenization, very few are known in the West because most of the writings are available in Chinese only, and so westerners have no practical way of accessing them. At the same time, the unadorned criticism of western churches and theology in these writings drew missionary suspicion as well as attention.<sup>7</sup>

Douglas John Hall describes the state of American and European churches as "diaspora" churches or post-Christendom.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps Hesselgrave and Rommen, for whom "Christendom" is a precondition, would consider Europe its foundation. But Douglas John Hall criticizes this standpoint. His feeling is that the world has never been Christianized and that there has never been a Christendom. Europe was influenced by Christianity in a relatively painless manner because on its arrival in Europe Christianity had not yet taken on a strong cultural shape. The carriers of Christian culture to Europe were the powerful Latin and Greek cultures of the day. Positing the western cultural context as a precondition of faith has already been proved a failure in the missionary movement during the colonial period. The method of making western churches the necessary mentors of other churches reveals a cultural self-righteousness which is hardly credible when western churches themselves are riddled with problems.

Presently, Third World Christianity is developing with a liveliness and vigor that western churches lack. This is not because it has imported western culture, but because the gospel has sunk roots in the local cultures. Thus, the renewal model is an impossible one and has no value for efforts at indigenization of the church.

## **2 Bevans' Contextualization Models**

Contextualization in China must address the issue of the adaptation of the Chinese Church to Chinese society. It is an issue of Christian theology and of Christian ethics as well as an ecclesiological issue. The issue of contextualization of Christian theology arises as a result of the importance modern people attach to the relationship between faith and individual being. This reflects the emphasis on the value of individual being,<sup>9</sup> along with stress on individual faith. Some people criticize the stress on the inevitability of theological contextualization, feeling that this is simply a way of dealing with some popular issues, accommodating modern people's needs. Contextual theologians' riposte to this is: theology has always been contextual. But differences remain. The crux lies in how great a role the human context plays in the process of theological contextualization. Should the needs of groups whose life experience differs be met in the process of expressing these groups' faith in theology? If the response to this question is in the negative, what is the goal of the theological process? Of course, contextual theologians are conscious that the context cannot be made the sole authority in the process of contextualizing theology, or in using the context to interpret the Bible. Rather the Bible must be read with a historical consciousness by a uniquely-existing self. Contextual theologians call for toleration for the revelation God gives to humans in their specific contexts.

In his *Models of Contextual Theology*, Bevans sums up contextual theology in five models: the translation model; the anthropological model; the praxis model; the synthetic model, and the transcendental model.<sup>10</sup>

Bevans gives a very detailed analysis of these models of contextualization, along with suggestions for concrete contexts. But there are three problems with his views.

First, Bevans does not distinguish contextualization and indigenization, but lumps the two together. He primarily analyzes issues of indigenization, not those of contextualization. Hesselgrave and Rommen have the same problem in speaking of contextual theology. In their *Contextualization*, it has to do with "theologizing, Bible translation, interpretation, and application; incarnational lifestyle; evangelism; Christian instruction; church planting and growth; church organization; worship style-indeed with all of those activities involved in carrying out the Great Commission." <sup>11</sup> Obviously, they have gone even further, mixing up methods and tactics of evangelism with theological contextualization. Evangelism does indeed need a theological basis (in fact, many very zealous evangelists lack the most basic theological foundation), but issues of evangelical technique mainly relate to how we treat culture and how to be faithful to the evangelical principles of the Bible.

Secondly, Bevans strives to keep to a "fair" and "objective" stance in exploring efforts to rebuild theology in other (non-western) cultural environments, but he has a western cultural stance in guiding its reconstruction there. He wants to use so-called western orthodoxy to guide Third World praxis. Donald L. Gelpi sees this contradiction as one between orthodoxy and the orthopraxis of liberation theology. "Within liberation theology the contrast between orthodoxy and orthopraxis arises from a common criticism voiced by liberation theologians. They fault classical, apolitical, academic forms of theology as well as much of the church's official pastoral magisterium for too much concern with orthodoxy, or doctrinal truth, and not enough concern with orthopraxis, or obedience to the moral demands of the gospel, especially in the area of public morality." <sup>12</sup>

He rightly points out that those so-called orthodox, non-political theologies are mainly concerned with safeguarding the accuracy of doctrine, while ignoring the moral demands of the gospel, and the orthopraxis that takes this as its principle in giving full play to theology. <sup>13</sup> Western churches, unconsciously or not, have frequently made their own cultural and political views the center of their religious orthodoxy. They define their own culture as Christian culture, and Third World culture as non-Christian culture, even non religious culture. They ask churches in non-Christian cultural environments to accept their guidance, but in reality this is cultural guidance. Francis Schussler Fiorenza, in a discussion of Chidester's views, says that when the colonial period had ended in Third World countries, "what was first identified as a lack of religion (fetishism) became the sign of religion." <sup>14</sup> He is pointing to issues of cultural bias and culture clash. But the standpoint of many Third World churches is that orthodoxy must be tested and amended by praxis. If we go by first impressions and take western culture as Christian culture, and judge cultural notions from other cultures by this cultural-cum-religious concept, the result will inevitably lead to a comprehensive rejection of the value of other cultures. This approach is a remnant of thralldom to colonial cultural ideology. In this sense, liberation theology is not only theological resistance, but also cultural and political resistance. What is more, the universal oppression and poverty that exists in Third World countries is mostly a direct result of western power politics. Many western churches essentially identify with their countries' tradition and contemporary politics, and are not yet able to critique power politics. This is the path the German churches followed during the Second World War. In such circumstances, how can western

churches guide theological contextualization for Third World churches? How can they offer guidance to Third World churches in cultural and political resistance?

Thirdly, an even more key issue is Bevans' stance in exploring issues in contextual theology (actually, for him, issues of indigenization): gospel or culture, or, gospel and culture.

Though in his discussion of the anthropological model Bevans points to the importance of context, his cultural standpoint means that he has not yet given up his recognition of the clash between the gospel and other cultures. Emphasis on a pure gospel leads to discussing "Jesus is Christ" as two questions and trying to find which is central. The recognition that "Jesus is Christ" is the starting point of all Christian theology. Only then can we discuss how to elucidate this issue as well as how to experience this confession in the concrete existence of humankind. In the course of the development of Christianity, due to the remnants of western-centric and colonial thinking, and added to this the innocence and readiness of faith, "Jesus is Christ", this individual confession, has mutated into a religious ideology, and Christianity has changed into a political force with a religious ideology. Some indeed have attempted to use the Christianization of the world to achieve ideological unity.

Martin Luther held that as soon as Christianity reached Europe it began to be corrupted, because the Christianity of that time possessed political privileges. Moltmann goes further, calling European Christianity of the period of special privileges "imperial religion."<sup>15</sup> "Jesus is Christ" is a prerequisite for theological exploration, for the incarnation event not only illustrates the unity of immanence and transcendence, but also illustrates that God's Word and culture are in harmony and not in conflict.

Furthermore, this historical event took place even as contradictions seemed to arise between the Word and culture. Those conflicts were expressed in the stumbling block to the gospel presented by Jewish culture. These were essentially cultural obstacles. The Jews confused religious concepts with cultural ones, replacing the religious experience of others with their own cultural experience. To be sure, in the Jewish religious and cultural environment of the time, all ethnic cultural forms could be seen as having religious significance, since the formation of the culture proceeded in parallel with the formation of the religion, and the two were inextricably linked. The Israelites, in the course of the formation of the religion of Israel, made the worship of Yahweh the most sublime form of expression of their culture (all the fine points of the culture come from the rules of this worship for example, regulations set out in Deuteronomy). This made the culture a religious culture, and its social norms strictly adhere to the regulations governing worship. From this the contemporary religious nation was established. Other cultures were shaped by completely different environments. The formation of any culture is related to religion, but not all cultures are religious cultures, even less can we substitute a religious culture for any other culture. The Jesus Christ event loosed cultural shackles in religious form that bound the universal nature of religion, and not shackles on religion originating from the culture itself.

The gospel and culture are not really in conflict. Clashes arise between the gospel and local cultures because when people take the gospel into another culture, they take their own cultural content with it. One theologian says that the systematic theology approach of making the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ into two issues for discussion is wrong in itself, because if the two are separated for purposes of discussion, there is no way to reunite them. The issue of the relationship between gospel and culture finds a response in the confession that "Jesus is Christ" because "Jesus is Christ" is an expression in human life of an utterance by God, and the Word realized in the form of the flesh. For Bevans, the gospel and culture are two opposites with a latent conflict and he deals with them in this way. This inevitably relativizes the validity of speaking about the gospel and culture in universal terms.

### **3 The Theological Task of the Chinese Church**

The primary task of Chinese Church theology today is to break through traditional Christianized myths and pretentiousness, and establish our theological foundation on the confession that "Jesus is Christ," a confession that must be historical. The church must break through the state of affairs where faith has mutated into religious ideology, making Christianity into a secular force and losing the spiritual power it had given humankind. Only then can the church bring about the historical confession that "Jesus is Christ," and only this confession can enable the church to accomplish the theological breakthrough spoken of above.<sup>16</sup> To achieve this goal, the path the Chinese Church must follow is that of church indigenization and theological contextualization. In what follows, I would like to suggest some models for both indigenization and contextualization. Obviously, these are not fully realized, because specific substance must come from praxis, not from words on paper. These are simply methodological suggestions. There should be no restrictions upon these models, for in any cultural environment and context, the church must continually undertake this kind of praxis to maintain its own nature.

The ***cultural praxis model*** is the proposed model for indigenization of the church. It represents the resistance of many Third World churches toward western cultural bias. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century especially, with the cultural awakening of Third World peoples, the myth of western cultural centrism has been broken through and the call for Christianity to think in terms of cultural praxis has become quite universal. The precondition for this is not to set the essence of gospel and culture in opposition, but to recognize that gospel must be expressed in specific cultural forms. In any cultural environment, the gospel must use the most basic means available to express itself. Christian cultural praxis does not mean willingly accepting cultural limits, but it is inevitable that the modes of the expression of faith would be subject to cultural limitation. In undertaking cultural praxis, Christianity casts off the limitations of its innate cultural angle, and transcends them. This is an expression of the transcendence of the gospel. Think of Jesus whose image encompasses both the servant and the oppressed; yet in his weakness his Christ nature is made manifest. The gospel's transcendence of culture can only be made manifest in active Christian cultural praxis. The fear that the gospel may be limited by local culture is an expression of cultural dread. Robert T. Osborn

says: "Ultimately, theology is faith seeking understanding." <sup>17</sup> Only where there is an appropriate means of expression can we seek appropriate understanding. On this point, the indigenization of the church and the contextualization of theology are closely related. We must not split hairs by trying to discover which came first.

The need for indigenization was raised in the Chinese Church in the late 19th century. It was an expression of cultural resistance on the part of the Chinese Church. The post-denominationalism of the Chinese Church today is a historical expression and praxis of indigenization of the Chinese Church in Chinese culture, because it is a form of expression of the idea of harmony in that culture. This cultural praxis of the Chinese Church is founded not only on the needs of the cultural environment, but is consonant with the social praxis of the gospel books wherein Jesus pays with his life to enable the gospel to genuinely transcend cultural limits. The Three-Self Renewal Movement was a new theological movement in the Chinese Church, as well as a movement to indigenize the church. With modern Chinese history and the reality of Chinese society as its background, there were two primary issues: how the gospel could be integrated into Chinese culture—a question of indigenization of the church<sup>18</sup> -- and how theology could be integrated with the social praxis of the Chinese Church -- a question of contextualization.

A significant issue in the process of the indigenization of the church is the distinction between indigenized religion and cultural religion. Jesus' efforts were to enable religion to undertake a cultural praxis in culture, not to enable religion to become cultural religion, or to make culture into religious culture. If Christianity were to become cultural Christianity, it would lose the ability to transcend culture, to transcend reality, and it would lose its internal cohesiveness for believers who also seek to transcend reality. This is a lesson from European churches. The reason Pannikar believes that European churches are not at present at the center of the world, but are at the margins of human existence, is because Christianity has become merely an extension of middle-class cultural life.

Indigenization will not happen simply because there is awareness of the need for it. It must be carried on while engaging in clear-headed cultural praxis and with continual reflection on one's own culture. The Chinese Church should not have false expectations that indigenization will happen through the efforts of one or several generations. Indigenization is one of the permanent tasks of the Chinese Church -- and not simply of the Chinese Church -- it is also an issue of establishing a new missiology suited to the needs of the Chinese Church and the needs of Chinese society. <sup>19</sup> As long as the Chinese Church continues without ceasing to fulfill the mission entrusted to the church by Jesus, it must continually address issues of missiology, for this touches on the relationship between the expression of faith of the Chinese Church and Chinese culture; that is, the issue of Christian faith in the Chinese cultural praxis, or, the issue of Christian faith in the process of cultural ideation in Chinese culture. If a religion in a specific culture rids itself of the ideation process of the culture, it will remain forever an unfamiliar outsider. If its faith and doctrine system cannot find expression in the daily cultural lives of the people, it will not be able to produce in people an ultimate yearning

for the faith it expounds, and its believers will either seek quick success and instant satisfaction or be believers in name only.<sup>20</sup> The development of a cultural tradition is ongoing and continuous, and the special characteristics of this continuous development inevitably determine the protracted nature of the church's indigenization movement.

The **historical praxis model** is a model of theological contextualization. Its emphases are related to those of Bevans' anthropological and praxis models, but there are some differences in the historical self-consciousness of the proposers. Thus there is also a different starting point in terms of cultural consciousness.

The historical praxis model stresses that the rebuilding of Chinese theology must have as its foundation the rebuilding of a historical consciousness, to enable it, within its own historical consciousness, to break out of its chrysalis and enter into the historical present. Through its description of Job's experiences, the Book of Job tells readers how to know faith in social praxis rather than through self-recognition. Job's inner conflicts arise out of a traditional isolated self-consciousness cut off from the continuation of historical consciousness. His breakthrough lay in the struggle to reintegrate his own consciousness with the historical consciousness into a present consciousness. The rebuilding of a historical consciousness includes efforts at indigenization and the praxis of contextualization. In terms of culture, the book of Ecclesiastes achieves new heights in the cultural history of Israel. It transcends the fixed customary cultural notions, making individual being the basis of human worth.

The experience of the Chinese Church is unique (as is the experience of any church). Its unusual experience is the preparation God has specially given it for doing historical reflection. The Three-Self Renewal Movement of the 1950s was the beginning of historical reflection in the Chinese Church, and was also an awakening of the historical self-consciousness of church. It showed that the church was no longer closed in on itself, but opened up to society and the world.<sup>21</sup> The meaning of the Chinese Church lies in its selfhood. But the self must exist as a subject consciousness. During the mission board era, the Chinese Church could not exist as an independent subject, so its self-understanding was not part of its self-consciousness. We may say that only from the start of the Three-Self Renewal movement within the Chinese Church, did the church have a consciousness of self and self-worth in terms of the meaning of existence.

The implication of the historical praxis model is the need for reflection on the confession that "Jesus is Christ." This confession must be historical and present, because only by bringing this historical faith into relationship with the present, can the confession that "Jesus is Christ" become a historical event for individual believers as well as for the church. Osborn critiques the possibility of constructing a new theology: "These theologies, many of which are rarely denoted as Christian theology, are in fact Christian only to the extent that a basic element of their data base is the Christian tradition, and insofar as they seek political power in and through the Christian community, but not because they are committed to that community, share its faith, or seek its well being and development. In other words, these theologies are certainly as ideological and political as the traditional theology they protest or appropriate."<sup>22</sup>

It seems Osborn has not been able to put himself in the position of understanding the needs of African Americans and women who have been subject to social and religious bias-needs expressed in North American African-American theology and feminist theology-and feels that all these are not his theology.<sup>23</sup> But his analytical method is not entirely without meaning. For him, the error of theology is either to have Christ without Jesus, or Jesus without Christ. And the fact is that "Jesus is Christ." Thus, genuine theology has to do with God and not with the church.

"Jesus is Christ" is a historical confession, because the truth this confession declares is the result of experience and knowledge within self-existence. Thus "Jesus is Christ" is God's Word become historical event. The Chinese Church must, within its self-existence, return to the Protestant tradition of *sola scriptura* to discover its own (the church's) historical meaning.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the church must, in the Three-Self renewal spirit, strengthen the self-consciousness of this moment and enable it to become historical place. This is the historical and actual meaning of "Jesus is Christ," and it is the mission of the Chinese Church to make the confession to "Jesus is Christ" today's historical event.

In the context of China, the historical praxis of the Chinese Church implies that we must carry out theological renewal; that is, through a process of self-reflection, extend ourselves out of tradition into the modern age and face the future. This is a process of breaking out of the chrysalis. Religious faith is not an ideology, not some worldview, but the self-consciousness of individuals in history.<sup>25</sup> The breakthrough in traditional theology depends on how to enable the implications of a sustained ontology, along with the religious ideology that results from an understanding of doctrine unrelated to context, to become a new historical consciousness: In the midst of the exodus, the melding of the religious consciousness with the social consciousness of the people of Israel produced a historical consciousness, and moreover made their entire faith history into a historical event. The formation of religious ideology is an embodiment of historical political consciousness; religious ideology thus has no new place in terms of religious meaning. The establishment of the monarchy in biblical Israel may serve as an example: the political struggles between the Israelites and other peoples became, in the Israelites' religio-cultural historical consciousness, faith struggles. And the great priestly class, while fulfilling its religious mission, extended it to a political one. This led to conflicts taking a religious form during the transition, in line with the needs of social development from a theocracy to a monarchy. This conflict not only explains the formation of the religious ideology of the time, but can be extended to collaboration with victimization in the German church in World War II, or the present political backwardness of the Vatican, as well as the situation of some western churches which have become marginal social groups, religious only in form.

New theological methods come from critical reflection on old theological methods and thinking. If a church has lost the capacity to carry out reflection on its internal self-experience, it cannot continue to have a prophetic function, because the prophetic function of the church is the continual shaping, through self-reflection, of the revelation it

receives from God into the principles of its praxis. A critique of the old theology is a necessity, for the principles offered by it for church praxis can no longer bring the church's new experience into line with the new praxis. The critique of the old theology is the church continually linking itself to its foundation God-and enabling it to continue in history to seek the recovery of its alienated self. For example, in speaking of the task of theology in the postmodern age, Osborn says, "...what I would call the new theology has served the interests of the dominant, white, bourgeoisie male world... it worked for white, bourgeois males." <sup>26</sup>

If we do not critique this function of traditional theology, the church will be unable, in a new context, to bring the needs of its believers, generation after generation renewed, before God. Therefore, the critique of old theology is a necessary means of self-renewal for the church. Not only can the church renew itself through a critique of old theology, but the setting right of old theology offers the church standards of church praxis as well as standards of social praxis. The church can fulfill its correct social function: the function of being salt that Jesus asked of it in the New Testament.

Theological renewal is a new way of confessing "Jesus is Christ" for the Chinese Church today, and is also a way for the church to enable its internal self-consciousness to transcend the self and become a historical consciousness. Carrying out theological renewal requires new theological methods. Prof. Peter C. Phan of American Catholic University declares that Jesus has already told us the new theological method: New wine in new wineskins (Matthew 9: 17).<sup>27</sup> Jesus' emphasis here in Matthew is to enable his disciples to understand that everything he is preaching is practical for real society, but can also transcend religion and culture-at the time the religious and cultural environment was closed to Jesus' message. If we cannot come to know his teaching from a new angle, we cannot understand the practicality of his teaching in real terms nor its religious and cultural transcendence. New wine cannot be put in old wineskins; new fabric cannot be sewn onto old cloth. New theological thinking cannot be established on a cognitive foundation of old theology, because we cannot make the particular results of historical development into norms of current praxis. Old theology is the result of historical development, and thus is not able to transcend history. The church's knowledge of tradition cannot transcend the historical meaning of religious norms.

The new theological praxis of the Chinese Church cannot begin from a totally new theological model, for new theology is a product of the continual summing up that goes on in the new praxis. The new theological thinking of the Chinese Church can only, must only, begin with an entirely new approach to theological exploration. This new approach must be never again to limit the confession to "Jesus is Christ" to an internal personal experience, but to open itself up, and in relationship to the world, construct itself in this present historical consciousness and undertake a new orientation toward its firm belief that 'Jesus is Christ.'" Such orientation of the self is not a one-time event, but something ongoing. The capacity of the church for continual self-reorientation is a precondition for maintaining its prophetic function. It is only through a continual process of self-reorientation that the church can keep its self-consciousness in a clear-headed, close, and reciprocal relationship to its context, and only in this way keep itself in the role of

prophet. In this sense, the Chinese Church in the 1950s and in the early 1980s was situated in a conscious state of being, for it was continuously self-reflexive, attempting to discover in its own existence its meaning in the historical present. Thus we can say that the Chinese Church's period of conscious existence was that period in which it was searching for a mode of expression from within the Chinese cultural tradition and thus carrying on cultural praxis. This was the period of its efforts at indigenization. This was also the period in which it strove to carry out a historical self-orientation in the Chinese context, the period of its efforts at contextualization. Efforts in both these areas indicate that the church is moving toward maturity as it begins to be able to face the world as a self-conscious subject engaged in self-reflection and as it engages in reorientation in the process.

#### **4 Conclusion**

China today is open in terms of self-consciousness, or we can say that China has always been open, because even though during the Cultural Revolution era this self-consciousness was always in a state of tension, it was never genuinely closed off. This was what brought about the great reforms of the 1980s. The energy amassed by China's rich cultural tradition over thousands of years must be expressed (we could also say set free), and the need to express this cultural energy guarantees that Chinese culture will always be in a state of self-reflection.<sup>28</sup> China's cultural tradition offers an excellent environment for self-conscious reflection by the Chinese Church, and the Chinese context offers a not-to-be missed opportunity for the church's reorientation. But there are serious challenges for the Chinese Church: the development of modern society, the intensification of the market economy, the rising level of privatization, and the influence of western individualism. Amid the voices hawking the market economy and globalization, amid the din of extreme individualism, the western churches have weakened. Western churches on the one hand have accepted an official ideology to maintain the symbol of the universality they once had; on the other hand they must recognize the trend toward personalization of faith. We might say that the personalization of faith in postmodern society is a rational need of modern people, or that it is difficult to avoid, simply an attempt at finding an excuse for the church's decline. The church, this historical faith community, has a historical mission to stand firm in an extremely personalistic, postmodern society. Whether or not the Chinese Church can shoulder this mission depends on how it carries out its historical reflection.

In the postmodern era the world has broken through cultural boundaries, and cultural exchange and dialogue have led to religious dialogue. From this angle, the world seems to be tending toward peace. But politically, dictatorship and brutality are not yet passes power and might are stronger than ever. Such power politics have also affected the religious realm. The self-righteous religious ideology is still strong and tries to extend its influence, either independently or as a political force. This is due to the fact that these churches have lost the capacity to confess anew to the declaration that "Jesus is Christ," but rather make maintaining the benefits that affect their own interests their ultimate mission. Such a situation is the fundamental reason why a church must reaffirm the confession "Jesus is Christ."

There are in the Chinese Church, as in all churches, many aspects that don't come up to expectations. There are present as well as historical reasons for these. In the 1950s and early 1980s, the Chinese Church was in a place of independence and could thus declare to the Chinese people that its mission came from its confession of faith. In the late 1980s and 1990s the Chinese Church entered a period of rapid growth, but this development has not yet been reflected to any great extent in a connection between its mission and its confession of faith. Rather the overseas "colonial church" mentality has replaced the experience of an independent realized self in its declaration of faith. The close of the 20th century was also the time of the greatest challenge of the influence of secularism in the Chinese Church, as reflection on the declaration of its faith became the primary concentration for the Chinese Church, as a realized self, once again. In theological consciousness, this was another point when Jesus became Christ in the Chinese Church. It was also another time of renewal for the Chinese Church, a juncture when it turned toward the future. Whether or not it has the capacity for cultural or historical praxis is the key to whether the Chinese Church will flourish, for there are already so many examples to show that any church, if it loses the capacity to reaffirm that "Jesus is Christ" in its own cultural and historical praxis, will inevitably separate Jesus from Christ. The result of this is that the "Great Commission" becomes an excuse for different groups to benefit themselves and the divine commission becomes a cloak for the secular commission by which they do so. The Chinese Church should take this as an object lesson.

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- 1 Heidegger/Ott, *Heidegger and Theology*, edited by Liu Xiaofeng, translated by Sun Zhouxing et al (Hong Kong: Institute for Chinese Christian Culture, 1998), 12-13.
- 2 The Chinese cultural tradition does not refer narrowly to the old culture, but to the continuing rich development of Chinese culture within the Chinese tradition. Stress on cultural tradition is not necessarily to reject new content, nor is it necessarily in conflict with a pluralistic culture, for Chinese culture itself is pluralistic. Today's Chinese culture is a product of tradition, or is an extension of tradition, but it has also absorbed new cultural thinking and cultural concepts. The development of the cultural tradition, while it must strive to acquire new things, must also eliminate factors that are not beneficial to its development.
- 3 He Shiming, *Looking at Chinese Filiality from a Christian Viewpoint* (Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 1999), 21.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_, *A Christian-Confucian Dialogue* (Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 1999).
- 5 Ai Bo Lin, *Theological Research An Encyclopedia-style definition*, translated by Li Qiuling (Hong Kong: Institute for Chinese Christian Culture, 1999), 60.
- 6 David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization* (Baker Book House, 1992), 41.
- 7 Winfried Gluer, *The Theology of T.C. Chao*, translated by Deng Zhaoming [Joe Dunn] (Hong Kong: CCLC, 1998), 30-31.
- 8 Douglas John Hall, *Confessing the Faith* (Fortress Press, 1996), 201331, 257.
- 9 This is not meant to imply that stress on the individual consciousness is a modern concept.
- 10 Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992). [The author's detailed discussion of each model has been omitted here for reasons of space].
- 11 Hesselgrave and Rommen, 200.
- 12 Donald L. Gelpi, *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* (Paulist Press, 1994), 26.
- 13 Ibid., 26.

- 14 Francis Schussler Fiorenza, "Religion: A Contested Site in Theology and the Study of Religion" *Harvard Theological Review*, 93:1 (January 2000): 18.
- 15 Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 166.
- 16 If the church limits itself to a narrow interpretation of doctrine, it will lose the corrective function in society that it should have and will become sidelined as a force in society; this is an indication of secularization of the church.
- 17 "Theological Table Talk the Possibility of Theology Today," *Theology Today*: 564.
- 18 Liu Zongkun of the Philosophy Department of Beijing University holds that the Chinese Church's Three-Self Movement has been a process of "nationalizing" the church, a far cry from the goal of indigenization. This accusation lacks historical and academic rigor. A poetic romantic humanism cannot be used as a practical critical weapon. The indigenization goal of the TSPM is to make the Chinese Church Chinese, not to make it a national church and when the new government established in 1949 received the support of the people, if the church did not go with this historical tide it would have lost the social praxis of the gospel. Old thinking in the Chinese Church must be broken through, but this will take time. The energy of the Chinese Church was in the past given over to training preachers, not scholars, but this situation is changing. The kind of "national church movement" I Liu speaks of would lead the church to abandon its cultural responsibility and fall into a narrowness of fundamentalism, conservatism and personal salvation
- 19 The author's term, here rendered "missiology," *xuandao xue* in Chinese, could literally be taken as "evangelism Studies." He says I cannot avoid the use of *xuandao xue*, but I personally take issue with the term. *Xuandao* does not necessarily have anything to do with "spreading the gospel," but diverts people's attention from the gospel to church growth. In the colonial period the church stressed evangelism (*xuan jiao*) and not spreading the gospel (*chuan fuyin*). The term *xuanjiao xue* [as used in Chinese--ed.] cannot shake the associations of that corrupt period of church history.
- 20 The Chinese Church has grown rapidly, but the quality of faith among believers is generally low. The primary reason for this lies in the fact that the Chinese Church has not yet achieved a cultural ideation. Either there is the form of Christian faith with a folk-belief essence, or the content of faith is that of a faith response to the western culture of several centuries past. This is the issue the movement for indigenization seeks to address.
- 21 This opening up was dialectical. Through efforts at independence, the historical self-consciousness of the Chinese Church was awakened, opened up. The self-consciousness of the Chinese Church under the domination of the western churches had been isolated, suppressed. Thus, at the time, as an organization the church was open, but its self-consciousness as a community of faith was closed.
- 22 Robert T. Osborn, "Theological Table Talk the Possibility of Theology Today," *Theology Today* (January 1999): 566.
- 23 He recognizes liberation theology as genuine theology, because it is a theology of the church, that deals with God and Jesus. He also declares that liberation theology belongs to the Third World, but he is not in the Third World, so he does not need liberation theology. But African American theology and feminist theology are a part of liberation theology broadly defined, and the faith needs expressed in these theologies are those of his First World.
- 24 This is not to suggest that the Chinese Church has not stressed the Bible in the past. The tradition of the Chinese Church is people and the Bible, that is, it stressed the interpretation of the Bible by specially appointed persons. Martin Luther's emphasis on *sola scriptura* was that I in my individual existence or this present experience take the Bible as authority and through the Bible receive the revelation of the word of God. The method of the person and the Bible is I with my knowledge of the Bible must proceed, taking the authority of others
- 25 In this sense, historical consciousness is religious, for the self-consciousness referred to here is the consciousness of an existing self, and consciousness of existence is itself religious. See Macduarrie' *Principles of Christian Theology*, translated by He Guanghu (Hong Kong: Center, 1998), 139-164.
- 26 "Theological Table Talk," 566.
- 27 Peter C. Phan, "Method in Liberation Theologies," *Theological Studies* vol. 61 (March 2000). 61-63.
- 28 The Qing government's policy of isolation was maintained until the mid 20th century. China's powerlessness in the face of allied powers does not mean that Chinese culture was weak or out of date, rather it was engaged in a new stage of cultural reflection and storing up energy, preparing for Chinese culture to enter a new era of development. This reflection included the digestion and

absorption of the Manchurian culture and other foreign new culture concepts, it also included ,he chrysalis process of the new Culture Without that long period of painful reflection, there would have been no new China in the 20th century and no new vigor appearing in Chinese culture in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century

## **Theological Change and the Adaptation of Christianity to Socialist Society**

XIAO ANPING

Changing times are a challenge to Christian theology, and profound reflection, intro-retrospection and effective response and adaptation are universal phenomena and patterns in the history of the Christian churches and theology. Changing times and social development bring changes and development in theology as well, this is natural and inevitable. It is progress. This essay will examine the adaptation of Christianity to Chinese socialist society in terms of changes in theological thinking.

A history of Christian thought is also a history of the development of believers' knowledge of God, as well as a history of the way in which theology develops in response to societies and cultural contexts. In the latter years of the ancient church, as the it gradually became more Romanized, developing into the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages and part of feudal society, the theology of the church fathers was supplanted by the reigning Scholasticism. With the east-west schism, the eastern church split from the western church and developed into Eastern Orthodoxy. Thus joined to the context of Slavic culture, ethnicity and society, the eastern church gave shape to its unique orthodox theology. The Catholic Church became increasingly corrupted in the late Middle Ages, the sale of indulgences on a grand scale caused a great deal of damage and the church failed to adapt with the developing times. The religious reformation of Martin I other sprang up under the influence of the renaissance, humanism, and classical studies. Guided by God, and after arduous searching, he formulated a return to the Bible and "justification by faith," pasting up his 95 Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, raising the curtain on the religious reformation. This caused tremendous changes in theological thinking, and through "the priesthood of all believers" which allowed direct knowledge of God, brought freedom and liberation of thinking through truth, new life to the Church and reinvigoration of the spiritual to believers. "Martin Luther brought the idea of struggle for the human right to self-determination into the realm of religious doctrine, and thus weakened the church's strict control over believers." <sup>1</sup> By means of changing a world-denying church into a church that engaged the world, Calvin joined the religious life to the secular life, which helped people realize their own potential for positive action, making religious life into a practical faith, a human way of life marked by good morals, improvement and healthy behavior-, all developments beneficial to society.

All these followed the tides of history and the progress of the times, propelling theology toward change and reform. The movement for religious reformation movement became the third thought movement of the cultural renaissance, taking direct part in the great intellectual transformation of the time. Thus the religious reformation can be seen as the expression of humanism within the church. This not only propelled changes in theology, but propelled progress in all European history and society, becoming the first of the three decisive engagements of the bourgeoisie against feudalism.<sup>2</sup> This is sufficient to show its significance as preparation for modern society. With changes in theology illuminating its just and progressive nature, Protestantism broke out of Catholicism,

finding its feet and setting out on the path of development. Thus the establishment and development of Protestantism was a development of adapting to the times and to society.

Besides changes and development in society, theological change is brought about through different denominations and theological systems, but these, such as the three main streams of Christianity -- Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox -- and other smaller denominations and theological systems, are formed by their encounter and union with their different political, economic, cultural, social and ethical contexts. It is because of these differences and riches that human knowledge of God grows deeper. It is these that strongly propel development of the church, improvements in theology and formation of theological systems. At the same time, the church universal is enriched by particularity and plurality, enabling the particular and the universal, the individual and the shared to be united. How can we keep theology from simply fitting in with traditional views and values today, and reach for change and development? This requires that traditional views and values be tested against today's times and realities, pondering and measuring them against transformed circumstances and actual conditions. We must more rationally and thoroughly bring forth new explanations and expositions of theology. Moreover, through the revelation of truth God give us in our new times and different contexts, we must allow persons to gain greater sight and light. The contextual differences and similarities in different places during the same times can also be expressed as changes and different characteristics in theology. Additionally, sharing, exchanges, study and research among believers can also serve to improve knowledge and ideas, thus promoting adjustments and changes in theology.

Do changes in theology change faith? No. Theological change takes place within the prerequisite of an unchanging faith. It does not change faith; quite the opposite, it witnesses to and strengthens faith. "Theological thinking in the church regularly undergoes change, but the basic faith of the church is firm and unchanging. The Trinity, the Incarnation, Christ's death on the cross for all humankind, His resurrection on the third day; all these cannot change. And it is because these fundamentals do not change that theological thinking must make necessary adjustments according to changing times."<sup>3</sup> Theology is an explanation of faith, the church in the act of thinking. Different times have a different message to transmit and different theological explications of that message. In order to be in line with the needs of the times, theology has to explain faith according to the times so that the people of this time can better understand and accept it. Thus faith is unchanging, but each age changes, and the theology which follows along with the changes in each age to explain faith, also changes. Nor is change in theology in conflict with the Bible. The progression from the image of God as disciplinarian in the Old Testament to the loving God of the New Testament to God as Love (1Jn. 4:8), illustrates that in the Bible, too, people's knowledge of God, or theological thinking, changes. The meeting in Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15 decided to abolish adherence to Jewish law and custom, such as the practice of circumcision, so that the gospel could be preached abroad, enabling Christianity to break through the bounds of Judaism and become a world religion. This also represents an instance of great change in theology, allowing people to come to a new understanding that Jesus is

not simply the savior of the Jews, but Savior of the Gentiles as well. This was a meeting of great significance in the history of the church. Because it broke through old barriers and the rigidity of traditional thinking, it enabled the church to flourish and develop, and in this way, changes in theological thinking were not opposed by the church, but rather were actively promoted and supported, just as the decision made by the gathering in Jerusalem.

"Because God reveals things to us in the Bible gradually, revelations are not single events, over and done with. In the same way, human understanding of God's revelation does not come all at once either, but unfolds and increases gradually." <sup>4</sup> It is extremely important to look at God's revelation in the Bible and in history developmentally; in addition, humans are so minute and their capacity for understanding so limited that they cannot understand the perfect and inexhaustible truth all at once; they must follow a long path and use every means, ceaselessly exploring, to come to a gradual understanding. God, many times and in many ways through the prophets, instructed the ancestors, and Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them all now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..." (In. 16: 12-13). Human knowledge comes gradually, changes and grows gradually, just as the two thousand years of theological history tell us: Human knowledge of God develops through a process from limited to greater, from shallow to deep, from simple to complex, from abstract to concrete.

In Roman Catholicism as well as in Protestantism, and influenced by the religious reformation, inner reform took place. There were changes in theology, and there were new trends, such as an emphasis on positivist theology and theological terminology. Later there was Vatican II, where, faced with modern society, the Church undertook self-reflection and reform. Vatican II stressed that the Church's mission was to serve the people and pointed out that people join together as one in the body of Christ through baptism and the sacraments ... sharing in the priesthood of Christ and the orders of prophecy and kingship, and within their individual selves carry out the whole mission of sons and daughters of Christ within the church and in the world. Thus the Catholic Church raised the position and status of the laity in the church, as well as adopting a more tolerant and canny attitude toward human society and increasingly showing forth the local character of the church. Obviously even the Catholic Church makes relevant changes along with the changes in the times. In the modern period, following along with the development of modern industry, science and technology, and ethnic awakening, greater pluralism appeared in Christian theology: neo-orthodoxy liberation theology, process theology, theology of hope, black theology, feminist theology, ecumenical theology, dialogue theology, environmental theology, Minjung theology, contextual theology, water buffalo theology and cultural theology, to name but a few. The appearance of such a great many theologies witnesses once again to the fact that theology is continually changing and developing. This is a historical necessity, a demand of the times and social progress, as well as an internal developmental demand, an inevitability for the church itself.

Looking at the Chinese Church today in terms of theological change, we cannot be closed off upon ourselves, nor discard the universal laws and church truth of the development of Christian thought to run in the opposite direction. Rather, we should face the context and environment in which the church finds itself today -- Chinese socialist society -- and, following along with changing times and social development, adjust and develop the theological thinking of the Church. The reason Protestant Christianity has developed to its present state of vitality is because it has a strong capacity to adapt, not only to developing times, but an ability go ahead of the times. This is its prophetic voice, this is its long-sightedness and vision, this is the moral quality and special character a Church must have. Still, we should ponder the fact that the Chinese Church has a 50-year history of development, while the new social form established in new China has a 51-year history. How has Christianity adapted to this new era and new society? We would certainly not deny that the church has indeed greatly developed and that it has achieved some explorations and first steps in theology. At the same time, however, we must see that theology in the Chinese Church is still poor and backward. If we look at things with a historical attitude, we have not yet established a systematic theology and its attendant systems. We still have a problem in that believers remain poorly educated and lacking in their grasp of the faith, even sermon content is like that of 50 years ago and has not adapted to the times or to society. If change does not take place in the theology of the Chinese Church today, it will be very difficult to adapt to the ever-developing Chinese socialist society. But if we want to adapt, we cannot be satisfied simply with lip service: we must undertake to adapt theological thinking. Adaptation in theological thinking is the only true adaptation. In reality, if we want to adapt theological thinking, we must break through the old backward, stagnant traditional concepts and thought, and make some adjustments, changes and renewal. From this we can see that adaptation requires a great deal of effort, and we must strive to promote the reconstruction of theological thinking with all our might. The goal of theological reconstruction is adaptation to socialist society. "Whether or not it can promote the adaptation of Christianity with socialist society is the standard for assessing theological reconstruction."<sup>5</sup>

Chairman Jiang Zemin has asked that we work actively to bring about the adaptation of religion and socialist society. There is no reason to oppose this in terms of faith: there is no conflict with basic biblical faith, nor is it harmful to biblical truth. There is even less reason to oppose it in terms of changes that have taken place in historical and practical theology. The issue of adapting to socialist society also exists for education, social science, literature, art and morality. The adaptation of Christianity to socialist society is in line with the laws and standards of the Bible, church history and theological development, in line with the tides and progress of the times, and also in line with the will and truth of God. "Socialist society is the newest form of human society up to the present, it is possessed of a just and advanced nature, and because of this has shaped a new culture, art, philosophy, ethics, which, with all that is true, good and beautiful in this world alike emanate from the 'father of all light'. All this implies the pre-existence, perfection and transcendence of Christ, who overarches all in the cosmos."<sup>6</sup> Thus, adaptation is a matter of course. As Bishop Ting states: "For the benefit of our nation, and for the existence and witness of the church itself, adaptation to socialist society is a

reasonable course, the natural choice of any responsible citizen and any responsible believer."<sup>7</sup>

The present emphasis in the Chinese Church on theological reconstruction is an epic and tremendous work that concerns the future and fate of the church. It is an important guarantee and strategy in the continuation of running the church well according to the three-self principle, an important path to resolving the adaptation of religion and socialist society on a fundamental level. Whether or not it is possible to adapt to socialist society is to a great extent dependent upon theological thinking in the church, only by first doing a good job of building up theology, enabling it to adjust, transform and renew, enriching its content and special features in the new era, will religion be able to truly adapt to socialist society. Only when this takes place on the level of thought and knowledge will we be inevitably led to identify with the people of our nation and socialist society and adapt in action and practice. In this way, the Chinese Church will be contextualized and indigenized in the true meaning of those words.

And finally, two very important points. First, from the vertical of history and the horizontal of geography, and from the reality of the church to the practical needs of church development and the Bible, changes in theology are a universal law and important principle of the history of Christian thought and the development of the world Church. Thus, the adaptation of Christianity to socialist society is in line with this law and principle. It is reasonable, correct and inevitable. Second, for Christianity genuinely to adapt to socialist society, there must first be changes in theology, that is, we must undertake adjustment, change and renewal-invigorate theological thinking. The late Bishop Zheng Jianye measured the work of three-self by the following standard: "What benefit will doing this have for the nation? How will it benefit the church?" All must be weighed in the scales of love country, love church. Clearly, it is beneficial to the existence and development of the church as it faces a changing context, era, society and nation, that the theology of the church change, and thus adapt and establish a Church in China with a similar image to today's socialist society, full of the witness to the glory of Christ.

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1 Zhang Chuanyou, *Sources of Western Wisdom* (Wuhan: Wuhan University Press, 1999), 134.

2 Engels included the 16<sup>th</sup> century religious reformation, along with the 17<sup>th</sup> century English Reformation, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century French Revolution, in a list of three decisive battles by the bourgeoisie in the protracted struggle against feudalism. The religious reformation was the first, indicating its historical significance. Moreover the religious reformation led to the German Peasant Revolt. See Chen Xiux and Yang Zutao, *History of European Philosophy* (rev.ed. 1986) (Wuhan: Hubei People's Press, 1987), 227.

3 K. H. Ting, "The Unavoidability and Necessity of Adapting Theological Thinking" (*Nanjing Theological Review* (2/2000): 10.

4 \_\_\_\_\_, "God's Self Revelation in the Bible and Our Slowness in Grasping It" (*Nanjing Theological Review* (1/1999): 3; translated in *Chinese Theological Review* (14/ 2000): 32.

5 Ye Xiaowen, "With History as the standard, Strengthen results, open up the future" *Chinese Religion* (6/2000): 6.

6 Hua Yaozeng, "Theological Reconstruction is at Present the Main Task in Making Deeper and Developing the Three-Self Patriotic Movement" (*Nanjing Theological Review* 3/2000): 11.

7 See note 3 above.

8 Quoted in *Fifty Years of Three-Self* by Shen Derong (Shanghai: CCC, 2000), 52.

## **Approaches to Theological Reconstruction in the Chinese Church**

A Reading of K.H. Ting's *Love Never Ends*

CHEN YILU

In the three years since the publication of K.H. Ting's *Love Never Ends*,<sup>1</sup> *Nanjing Theological Review* and *Tian Feng* have regularly carried essays by readers discussing Bishop Ting's theology, expounding their perceptions, understanding and insights with regard to some of the ideas found therein. I found that I gained much through my own reading of the volume; though it is not strictly systematic, it is profoundly intellectual, enlightening and distinctive. *Love Never Ends* gives expression to K.H. Ting's great foresight in the matter of Chinese theological reconstruction.

I found five very important and inspirational "C's" in *Love Never Ends*.

### **1 Christ**

Christianity is a religion of faith in Christ and knowledge of Christ. In that case, how to believe in and understand Christ is the central question with which Christian theology must deal. The three creeds of Christianity (the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed) proclaimed a correct knowledge of Christ, with a proclamation of faith in pure faith terms. But Christians do not live in a vacuum, they must continuously think about issues raised by the conflicts between Christ and culture, faith and reality, reason and emotion. And so throughout the ages the church has produced an array of Christologies which are not entirely the same.

In "A Talk at a Theological Forum," discussing how to view truth, goodness and beauty outside the church, Ting summarized five approaches of certain Christologies:

1) Seeing non-Christian cultures through the eyes of rulers and with an attitude of superiority; 2) The so-called "angels of light" theory – "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (Tertullian) -- proclaiming that Christ differs from culture; 3) The inclusivity of Christ -- all truth, goodness and beauty come from Christ; 4) Christ as Fulfiller -- the fulfillment of the law, of religion and of culture; 5) The Cosmic Christ -- "recognizes the cosmic nature of Christ Jesus in addition to his human and divine natures."<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, Ting agrees with the fifth option. "Among these five approaches, the Cosmic Christ seems to embrace many aspects of the issue set out at the beginning: It enables us on the one hand to affirm the Christ of the New Testament and to affirm the very high Christology of John and Paul, while taking an enlightened and open approach to the truth, beauty and goodness of this world."<sup>3</sup> Ting makes his Christology even clearer in his essay "The Cosmic Christ."

The biblical evidences for the idea of the Cosmic Christ are found in John 8:58 and 17:24; in 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9-11; and Colossians 1:15-20. The French theologian Teilhard de Chardin was one of the first to give expression to it. He was a

Jesuit and paleontologist who worked in Beijing on the Peking Man site. His major works include *The Human Phenomenon*, *Le Milieu Divin*, and *La Vision du Passe*. De Chardin emphasized the wholeness of the cosmos as an entity in a constant process of creation. God's creation was ongoing and creatures constantly evolving, as was the human spirit, and all within the cosmos was under the Lordship of Christ.

Ting believes the significance of an emphasis on the Cosmic Christ is threefold:

1 The extent of Christ's work, concern and care are universal. The traditional concept of the Trinity on the one hand stresses that the three persons of the triune God are a perfect whole; on the other hand each person has that person's own work: the Father creates, the Son redeems and the Holy Spirit sanctifies and teaches. According to such an explanation, if the Son comes to the fore, the Father must "step down"; if the Holy Spirit comes to the fore, the Son must "retire". But according to the concept of the Cosmic Christ, "Creation, redemption, sanctification and education are one."<sup>4</sup> Ting believes that, "As creativity is inexhaustible and creation a long process, Christ has everything to do with Creation thus far and with Creation as it goes on now."<sup>5</sup> Redemption and sanctification are two prominent points in this process, and all is under the Lordship of Christ. All God's activities of creation and redemption are for the purpose of making humanity complete.

2 We believe in a God of love. "God is the Cosmic Lover, not the cosmic tyrant. Love is God's supreme attribute, over and above all his other attributes and subordinating them all. Love is the force directing God's ever-continuing work of creation, redemption and transfiguration."<sup>6</sup> "For Chinese Christians, to discard the image of a vengeful, frightening God, God the omnipotent in dealing with humans, and to come to adore God the Lover, the Sympathizer, the fellow-sufferer who comes to us, is a shift that is truly liberating."<sup>7</sup> In "God is Love" and "Understanding the Heart of God," Ting again explains the significance of belief in a loving God. "What is the most important and most fundamental attribute of God? It is God's love, the love shown in Christ, the love which does not hesitate before suffering or the cross, the love which made him give up his life for his friends. The justice of God is also God's love. If love spreads through humankind, it becomes justice. This is love entering into the world. Love does not come to destroy, but to sustain, heal, teach, redeem and give life."<sup>8</sup> "God is love. God is the Lover in the cosmos, the Lover at the center of all reality. The revelation of Jesus Christ transcends and corrects all that we humans are able to say of God. Love seeks the highest good for us. Nothing good will be lost; it will be fulfilled and lifted up, even to that heavenly kingdom which shall be, a kingdom founded in love."<sup>9</sup>

Since God is love, this gives us confidence to believe that everything will develop in a good direction, the human future will be bright, and semi-finished products will become rather good final products. "Since God is the Lover in the universe, he prefers to act through teaching and waiting rather than by coercion. Though not a few Christians lack loving hearts, since humankind is changing, they, too, are changing. A world in transformation is bound to have its dark and ugly side. Our comfort lies in the faith that says that no matter how dark things are, the world and we ourselves are changing and

that change is taking place within God's creative process, as we evolve from half-finished products to better ones." <sup>10</sup> Consequently our hearts are filled with comfort and thankfulness for the world of God's creation, and it is from this that a positive view of human life and largeness of spirit spring.

3 Harmony, not opposition. An emphasis on the cosmic nature of Christ, points to the fact that "the whole of reality is God's concern...", <sup>11</sup> both believers and unbelievers are under the principle of God's love, thus believers and unbelievers are no longer in an antagonistic relationship, but in one of dialogue and cooperation. To affirm God as the cosmic Lover is to see love as the motive force in God's continuing act of creation. This motive force is the creation of harmonious human society. Ting feels that since Christians are people who understand God's great love, they should take the initiative in reconciling with others, and the content of that reconciliation should include affirmation of all truth, beauty and goodness outside the church, no longer exaggerating the difference between belief and unbelief, but affirming the reasonableness of socialist society, thus enabling Christianity to adapt to socialist society, Ting says, "Today, what catches all Christians' vision is the picture of Christ leading the whole Creation towards the goal of unity in God. In this saving work of his, all human movements of progress, liberation, democracy and humanization are joined. The church is important as the place where Christ is explicitly known, confessed, adored and preached. The world needs the church's gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation and peace. But God's saving work is not coterminous with the boundary of the church. It has the whole cosmos as its limit." <sup>12</sup>

Christology is the center of Christian theology. Traditional Christologies were often products of the debate between "from higher to lower" or "lower to higher." The first gave prominence to Christ's divinity and transcendence. In modern theology, Barth and Rahner have been the leading proponents and developers of such a Christology. The latter type stresses Jesus as the model of religious meaning, with the emphasis on Jesus' human nature. Han Kung is associated with the promotion and development of this view. Both of these Christologies perhaps have their strengths and weaknesses. The first is often criticized as a form of cultural imperialism, while it is often difficult to justify the latter, for if human morality is taken as the standard, why should Jesus be revered as the Christ? Why not Confucius? Thus we see that in terms of Christology, the Cosmic Christ provides much more inclusive space. Yet there is no way to make a detailed distinction as to what in the cosmos is Christ's work and what is not

## **2 China**

"...we like to say: our faith is like an ellipse with two centers, the two C's; Christ and China."<sup>13</sup> China is another axis of Bishop Ting's theology. This C includes identification with Chinese culture. Ting graduated from St. John's University in Shanghai, a university famous for its westernized ways and use of English that was run by the American Episcopal Church. K.H. Ting is well known for his excellent grasp of English, but he is not sycophantically western. He studied and worked overseas for many years, gaining a number of "foreign" degrees. But though he may have worn western clothes, his heart remained Chinese. In the early years following Liberation, he resolved to return to

China, where he became involved in the Three-Self Movement and work for the church. This showed his identification with Chinese culture, his reliance on his native land and his love for new China.

Ting often calls upon Chinese classical culture and thinking; for example, he uses words of Lao Tzu to illustrate the truth of the resurrection: "What is of all things most yielding can overwhelm that which is most hard. Being substanceless, it can enter in even where there is no crevice. That is how I know the value of action which is actionless. But that there can be teaching without words, value in action which is actionless, few indeed can understand." He goes on to comment: "I think here Lao Tzu was feeling after something the Christian resurrection truth represents."<sup>14</sup> His attitude toward Lao Tzu's "innate goodness theory" was even more sympathetic. Attitudes like these express an identification with one's native land.

This C also contains patriotic sentiments. He likes to quote Psalms 137 and 126 as expressions of a Christian patriotic feeling: "Patriotism of this kind expresses itself in sorrow over national backwardness and humiliation and in joy over the people's emancipation and achievements."<sup>15</sup> Bishop Ting has this inner feeling, even more, he translates it into action. With the largeness of heart that marks the great people among us, he forgives the unfortunate things of history. Mrs. Ting, Siu-may Kuo, suffered during the Cultural Revolution, and her health was damaged. Yet, faced with these unfortunate setbacks to family and those he loved, Bishop Ting forgave history: "Events all over the world are telling us how tortuous the way is towards the perfect community of free, loving children of God, and how dear a price in suffering God and human beings have to pay for every inch of progress towards that goal."<sup>16</sup> But Christ's love and grace will triumph over all!

K.H. Ting says that his support of socialism is based on conviction and rational choice, a choice personal suffering did not make him regret. "We attach our hope to socialism, not so much because we know exactly in detail what the socialist way is, but because we are fed up by all the other choices open to us. What is common in these other choices is the large scale of private ownership of the means of production and the unfair distribution of wealth, requiring the masses of the people to bear the cost by enduring endless suffering."<sup>17</sup> Bishop Ting's patriotism is not simply a result of his condemnation of the capitalist system of private ownership, more important is the fact that though Communists are atheists, they also have the truth, goodness and beauty that come from the Cosmic Christ: "With the success of the people's revolutionary movement, the Communist Party, the People's Liberation Army, the people's government and the democratic parties all emerged before the people. They showed great moral caliber and had a high appeal to Christian intellectuals. These Christians felt that the New Being whom Paul talked about was there already, not in Christ but without him."<sup>18</sup> Since human history lies within the hands of the Cosmic Christ, we have no reason to completely deny the great enterprise of the establishment and construction of new China because of its being located outside Christ. In his "The Cosmic Christ" and in liberation theology, Bishop Ting has found the basis of theology. His patriotism is founded on a choice made through feeling and reason.

### 3 Contextualization

Barth's theology has been called a "theology of proclamation," that of Tillich, a "theology of response" or "dialogue theology." These are two different approaches, but since all theology is closely related to the context of the theologian, it would also be appropriate to call them "contextual theologies."

K.H. Ting's thinking is also related to his context. In "Theological Mass Movement in China," he points to the relationship between his theological transformation and the transformation of Chinese society. In 1949, the Chinese people were liberated from three great mountains [feudalism, imperialism and bourgeois capitalism--ed.] and established new China. Chinese Christians at the time had two attitudes toward these historical changes:

1 They realized that revolutionaries and Communists were not the monsters and rascals they were rumored to be; they were highly ethical and dedicated. Though they had no love for religion, they had no plans to persecute it or try to abolish it. A number of Christians saw hope in them and left the church and the faith. "In discovering these true revolutionaries the Chinese were both happy for seeing in them the hope for the future of China, and fearful before the haunting question whether there was still any ground for the existence of Christianity. Indeed, at that time, a number of Christians, in joining revolutionary ranks, did move away from the church and from the faith." <sup>19</sup>

2 Some other Christians stubbornly denied the revolutionaries and new China. They saw the establishment of new China as the end of the world, attacking the revolutionaries with "spiritual" language, denying the value of their good deeds, promoting the doctrine of "security of the believer," which meant that "the Christian has the freedom to do anything, while others are condemned no matter how good their work is." This "security of the believer" became a kind of weapon, misleading Christians in maintaining the dream of old China or being good citizens of the KNIT and imperialism. Such radical non-adaptation to the world as it is caused others to react against Christians, and so some left the church, and this increased the revolutionaries' vigilance against Christians.

"These two facts set Chinese Christians thinking. On the one hand, while being truly impressed by the conduct and deeds of the revolutionaries, many of us found it impossible to take leave of Christ but chose to say with Peter, 'You, Lord, have the words of eternal life. To whom can we go?' On the other hand, antinomian reactionism actually wanted us to go and stand and work against the people's liberation movement with all its goodness and beauty, and that was certainly an ethically indefensible alternative. Caught in between, Chinese Christians all over the country started to do theological reflection on their own."<sup>20</sup> Here Ting makes a profound reflection on historical fact. There is no reason why Christians should abandon our faith either because of the good deeds of others non-Christians) or, politically, because we support the Communist Party, or because our society has changed for the better. Of course,

neither should we, armed with the idea of the security of the believer," try to eliminate them. For one who lives in new China to build a theology appropriate to old China is tantamount to attempting to put new wine into old wineskins.

Since the appearance of the socialist system, many people have been exploring the relationship of Christianity to Marxism and socialism: some promote resistance, some dialogue, others submission-the notion of willing handmaidens -- similar to the "servant theology" of the former East Germany. Faced with the new lessons of Christian theology, Ting has not duplicated the paths of western theologies, but has made the choice for active inquiry and contextuality, and his has been an extremely significant attempt. Ting has a number of important theological points here.

1 Hold fast to the truth of Christ and do not abandon the church. He quotes Peter, "Lord you have the word of life, to whom shall we go?"

2 He urges Chinese Christianity to turn from the error of antinomianism to the right path and emphasize the significance of Christian values. For Chinese from the background of Confucian culture, which promotes "innate goodness of human nature," and for revolutionaries with revolutionary ideals and a sense of moral responsibility, this provides an easy channel of access.<sup>21</sup>

3 An emphasis on the Cosmic Christ is a theological viewpoint with an inclusivity which can embrace all things and thinking marked by values and ideals; within it there is no conflict between theist/atheist or believer/unbeliever. It gives expression to a kind of inclusive thinking that embraces peaceful theology, religious toleration and Chinese culture."

4 His approach does not exaggerate the differences between belief and unbelief. Ting in no way denies these differences, nor does he term it unimportant, but he feels that for Christians living in a nation under the leadership of the unbelieving Communist Party and in a nation where the majority of the people are unbelievers, there is no benefit to Christianity in emphasizing the difference; it is stupid and dangerous.<sup>23</sup>

5 He emphasizes a "God of love," because he believes that if we want to cause Chinese to believe in God, we should present God not as a destroyer, but as a lover. To him, love is God's most important attribute, even to the point of believing that justice submits to love."<sup>24</sup> China is a country in which people place their hopes of happiness on a system of enlightened rulers. Against such a cultural background, belief in a God of love is good news indeed. Justice is a principle more easily understood in a nation with a culture of rule by law. It is unfamiliar to Chinese who had their fill of oppressive feudalism. Thus, Ting's emphasis on God's love has great significance for proselytism as an attempt to break through the difficulties Christianity has always had in being accepted in China.

6 He stresses God's creation. There has always been a conflict within Christianity on whether creation or redemption should be paramount. Creation stresses the continuity

and completeness God's creation holds; redemption stresses human sin and the miraculousness and hope of redemption in Christ. Ting does not stress a foregrounding of Christ because of salvation, but rather the importance of the creation of hope because of Christ (the Cosmic Christ). This is a creation of love, a creation that brings hope, and thus is the creation of a Lover through whom hope comes to humankind. "This emphasis on God as the great lover working out his purpose for the world brings in its train an understanding of reality as becoming. It gives us hope for and beyond history."<sup>25</sup> If Moltmann stresses the cross (suffering) in his theology of hope, then Bishop Ting, in his "theology of hope" stresses creation and love.

Ting's theology has at its center an "expanded Christology" and extends this to God's creation and God's attributes, and then from this extends it to his theory of human nature. He does not, as Rahner does, use cosmology to expand his theory of humanity or follow his concept of "anonymous Christians," but places God at the center of his theology. Nor is he like Hans Kung, proposing the kind of theological dialogue which is like a flower without fruit or what has been called courtship without marriage, but rather expresses respect for the truth, beauty and goodness outside the church. For this truth beauty and goodness, though outside the church, is within the Cosmic Christ. Nor is he like an older generation of Chinese scholars, striving to establish an "indigenous theology" on the basis of Chinese culture. Retreating to an "indigenized" Christianity from a Christianity that is already universal and modernized is unrealistic; it can only be a local indigenization. Ting proposes an entirely new form of "nationalization." "Christianity is now making itself indigenous on a large scale, at a comparatively rapid pace and at a deep level. This has never happened before in history. This is the unique characteristic of the mission of our Chinese Christians."<sup>26</sup> "Nationalization" points not only to faith explorations on the cultural level, but is contextual theological reflection on the level of culture, political environment and historical conditions.

#### **4 Critique**

An overview of *Love Never Ends* shows us that Ting's thinking is very critical in nature. "Critique" means an analytical study reflecting a measured approach, not a disputational one.

Ting's critique encompasses three major areas: 1) The idea, put forward by some people overseas that Christianity must oppose an atheist government; 2) "Religion as opium"; 3) Conservative and backward theological thinking in the church.

Communists are atheists. Because of ideological differences, some people at home and abroad, especially those who have experienced the trauma of the Cultural Revolution, are extremely hostile to the Communist Party and to new China and this sense of antagonism is extremely serious. Some people even believe that a true Chinese Christian would resist an atheist government and be ready for martyrdom. Bishop Ting makes the following response:

1 "Socialism is good: it is lifting our country out of 'poverty and blankness.' We support it as a matter of course,"<sup>27</sup> though it cannot solve all humanity's ultimate questions.

2 "I am not terribly upset by the advocacy of atheism because the fact that God was, is and will be forever is not changed by any human denial of his existence. In our overwhelmingly secular society, even the very attempt to deny God is sometimes helpful by calling people's attention to the question of God."<sup>28</sup>

3 "We can join forces with humanitarians of many sorts. ... There is a part of me which utters a hearty 'Amen' to what they [Communists] advocate and exemplify, a part of me that refuses to rebuke them, but rather warms to them and wants to work with them against forces we both want to combat, even though we get our orders from different chains of command."<sup>29</sup>

4 "As long as there is common ground between communists and Christians as Chinese citizens, as long as there is space for us to maintain Christian worship and witness and church life, and as long as ways are open for useful dialogue on the implementation of the principle of religious freedom, we see no justification for thinking that atheists are our enemies and that belligerency is called for."<sup>30</sup> In "A Letter to a Believer," Ting reminds Christians in China, "should we be talking about opposition and fighting, or contact and dialogue? This is a very important question. ... the fact that those in the government do not believe in God, this does not constitute a reason for opposing the government either."<sup>31</sup>

Ting criticizes the attitude that proposes resistance based on ignorance of the realities of China and of the actual actions of the atheist government. Such a proposal is not rational, is dangerous and not in line with the Christian spirit of reconciliation. In a secular and pluralist society, we should be concerned, not with whether the people believe in the existence of God or not, but with whether we are able to witness to the existence of God; not with what the people may believe in, but with whether we have freedom of religious belief ourselves; not with what atheists may propose, but with what they do. A government of ideals, one with a sense of responsibility, one that can solve the needs for food and shelter of 1.3 billion Chinese -- why would we want to oppose it? Whether a government is good or bad depends not on whether it holds a certain religious belief, but on what it does for the people. Jesus was basically opposed to using religion to interfere in politics. He never considered establishing a Christian nation, and in fact, in the strict sense there could not be a Christian nation or government.

The theory of religion as opium has a long history. "Religion is the opiate of the people" has become a slogan, and is regarded with almost superstitious faith by some. But Bishop Ting makes a bold and objective challenge to this mistaken view: "Religion is a complex social phenomenon that plays many roles. Its role as an opiate in society, its narcotic role, the role it has played to obliterate the spirit of rebellion among the toiling masses, is, of course, a fact. But this is only one of the roles it plays, certainly not its only role-and by no means its main role under all circumstances."<sup>32</sup> "Today, we should pay greater attention to religion's role in exhorting people to do well. This aspect of

religion can be beneficial for unity and stability and economic production in socialist society. If the standard for the united front is not communism but patriotism, people can appreciate that believers' "good behavior" is good for the nation and need not scoff at it simply because they do not begin from a Marxist standpoint. As long as what believers' do is acceptable, religion will be more compatible with socialism and we should allow different paths to the same goal."<sup>33</sup> Ting's critique of the religion as opiate theory is clever and adroit and makes the point that political authority should have a tolerance of religion it should take a scientific view of religion, its mass nature, ethnic nature, international nature, long-term nature and complexity and deal with religious issues in the socialist period front a united front stance, taking into account the fact that religion can adapt to a socialist society.

In Ting's critique of "religion as the opiate of the people," we see his courage, wisdom and creativity, worthy of an astute church leader. Here we sense the spirit of the early Christian apologist Justin Martyr. Ting is not a martyr to the conflict between church and state, but an apologist who reconciles the two. In the third point, the term conservative refers to rigid, isolating, doctrinaire theology. The term "backward" refers to a disparity between faith and action, words and behavior, an inability to catch up with the modern age.

The church in China has been quite profoundly influenced by American fundamentalism of the 1920s. In itself, fundamentalism is a good thing but because of the narrowness, rigidity and self-importance of those involved, it came to be nearly synonymous overseas with "lots of enthusiasm but little knowledge," a faith unable to guide life in the modern world.

In Ting's view, the conservatism and backwardness of some Chinese theology is expressed in several ways:

1 "Antinomianism," a separation of faith from actions, empty talk about salvation and an absence of good works, such that Christianity is not respected by Chinese citizens. This has become a stumbling block to the gospel.

2 "Believers and unbelievers shall not be yoked together," exaggerating the contradiction between the two. This is certainly harmful to Chinese Christians who are a small minority.

3 An inflexible biblical eschatology that believes every word in the Bible is the literal revelation of God and ignores the idea that biblical revelation is gradual.

4 A stress on human sinfulness and its concomitant uplifting of salvation theory. This is accompanied by a downplaying of creation and a separation of creation, salvation and sanctification.

5 Intensifying the fearsomeness of the end of time and denying the meaning of this life. When Ting criticizes the backwardness of theological thinking in the church, it is not in

order to negate the church, nor to disparage one sort of theology and praise another. His primary goal is to reflect theologically, to give Chinese Christians a correct picture of the tension between faith and context, so that the Chinese Church will not simply be a pragmatic structure, but a church with its own theology, one that witnesses to Christ within the universal church.

Bishop Ting's critique at one time attracted some argument and resulted in palpable tension. Today, the theory that "religion is the opiate of the people," is passe. The idea that Christians should oppose an atheist government is sometimes heard, but the Chinese Church has more and more friends, backward theology is gradually declining, and the theology of the Cosmic Christ and God is love are gradually being accepted by more and more Christians. These ideas still meet with obstacles, but doesn't the meaning of faith lie precisely in the overcoming of obstacles, thereby coming to know God's might and great love?

## **5 Church**

Many of the selections in *Love Never Ends* deal with the church; this could be the subject of a monograph. For this reason, I am only skimming the surface here, and will make just three points:

1 The church is both local and universal in nature. Ting strongly emphasizes the necessary balance between the two; further, only by implementing its particularity can its universal nature show forth. In the case of the Chinese Church, its particularity or localness lies in running the church well according to the three-self principle.

2 The Chinese Church's post-denominational nature.

3 The co-existence of the visible and the invisible church. On the one hand, Ting stresses the salvific community -- the visible church -- for Christ is the way of eternal life and therefore we cannot look lightly upon the visible church. On the other hand, seeing the invisible church within the culture from the standpoint of the Cosmic Christ that Christ's truth, goodness and beauty also exist outside the church and that within culture (including Chinese Culture) Christ's revelation and action can also be dimly seen so that this is a church hidden or invisible within culture. This is where the views of Bishop Ting and Paul Tillich coincide, a very important and enlightening point for the Chinese Church.

## **Conclusion**

Theological reflection must have a solid grounding. Without this, it becomes mere empty talk or an ivory tower. It is my view that these five C's, found in *Love Never Ends*, can provide such a grounding for theological reconstruction. To put it more precisely, they function like a musical staff. Developing along the lines of the staff, we will certainly compose an outstanding piece of music.

Perhaps some people will find these five points insufficient, fearing not everything will be covered. This is naturally the case, yet perhaps the time for a work like the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas is past and it is not our present task to seek the last and encompassing word on the subject. Therefore, these five C's represent a possible direction for our present endeavor of theological reconstruction.

K.H. Ting's Cosmic Christ is a broad and rich theological concept. Modern rationalist theology limits God to the sphere of reason, denying God's transcendence, as Newton's scientific view placed God within the confines of science, God being useful only for what science could not explain, and as science grew and developed, the space for God shrunk accordingly. The Christ of the traditional church was a God barred within the sacred precincts of the church with precious little power to affect secular matters. Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christians" was a bold attempt to break through Catholic tradition into the modern age, but it has been criticized as cultural imperialism. By comparison, the Cosmic Christ is more inclusive, flexible and modern, encompassing a broader space. Perhaps there is some social gospel background to it, but it transcends the social gospel's blinkeredness. The Cosmic Christ can be said to be the liberation and sublimation of Christ, freeing Christ from the fetters of traditional concepts and giving Christ more scope: Christ should not be fettered, the Cosmos submits to Christ, and Christ transcends it.

From within his concepts of China, context and critique, Ting also brings out the importance of patriotism in theology and establishes thereon a "nationalized" and modernized Chinese Christian theology. This is a bold association and a brand new attempt, setting the coordinates for approaching Chinese Christian theological reconstruction.

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1 *Love Never Ends* was published in Nanjing by Yilin Press in September 1998. A traditional Chinese character version was later published in Hong Kong, and there are now English and Korean versions as well.

2 K.H. Ting, "Talk at a Theological Forum," in *Love Never Ends* (Nanjing: Yilin, 2000), 522. [Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are taken from *Love Never Ends*.]

3 *Ibid.*, 526.

4 "The Cosmic Christ."

5 *Ibid.*, 412.

6 "A Report to My Alma Mater," 466.

7 "The Cosmic Christ," 416.

8 "God is Love," 268.

9 *Ibid.*, 268-9.

10 "Understanding the Heart of God," 445.

11 "The Cosmic Christ," 415.

12 *Ibid.*

13 "A Rationale for Three-Self," 1 35.

14 "The Truth of the Resurrection," 88.

15 "A Rationale for Three-Self," 134.

16 "One Chinese Christian's View of God," 437.

17 Ibid., 431.

18 "Chinese Christians' Approach to the Bible," 383. "Without" or outside Christ, here means outside the church.

19 "Theological Mass Movement in China," 137.

20 Ibid., 138-9.

21 See "Theological Mass Movement in China," and "Another Look at Three-Self."

22 "A Report to My Alma Mater," 463.

23 "Theological Mass Movement in China," 14S. 24 "God is Love," 268.

25 "Chinese Christians' Approach to the Bible," 388.

26 "Another Look at Three-Self," 93.

27 "On Ultimate Questions," 242.

28 "A Report to My Alma Mater," 463-4.

29 Ibid., 464.

30 Ibid., 464.

31 "Letter to a Believer," 293.

32 "On Religion as Opiate," 227. 33 Ibid., 231.

## Theological Reconstruction in Shanghai

CAO SHENGJIE

### 1 Process

Since the resolution on "Strengthening Theological Reconstruction" was passed at the Jinan Meeting in 1998, the Shanghai CC/ TSM has made it a focus of attention. As part of its efforts to communicate the spirit of the meeting, the municipal CC/TSM have held many sessions on the significance of theological reconstruction for district and provincial co-workers, lay workers and elders.

In the first six months of 1999, we organized open discussions for young and middle-aged co-workers in which they selected the topics from among eight issues to be found in the church. These issues were: the boundary between the spiritual and the secular; the relationship between church and society; the relationship between faith and reason; are believers and unbelievers opposed to one another; how goodness, truth and beauty outside the church should be viewed; how the Second Coming should be preached; what view to take of material wealth; and how to aid believers in the moral questions they face at home. Following these discussions, representatives from each group met in a joint sharing session and many short essays were submitted.

In the second half of 1999, we had a half-day meeting every other week for pastoral workers on self-propagation. Foremost among the topics they selected (from the eight above) was "the boundary between the spiritual and the secular." The 13 short essays that emerged were collected in the second booklet in the Self-Propagation Study Series: *Spiritual Explorations*.

In 2000 we organized the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Three-Self around the theme "The Direction and Path Forward for the Chinese Church," and asked colleagues to hold symposiums on their experience of the 50 years of the Three-Self Movement, considered in the light of hermeneutics and theology, knowledge of church history, and the status quo of socialist society in China. Under the general theme were eight sub-categories:

- 1 The Church is a group composed of a people chosen and called by God. What then is its relationship to society?
- 2 Jesus is the Head of the Church. Then how do we understand that the church on earth must be patriotic and law-abiding and accept administrative leadership?
- 3 The Church must act in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Why then does it need human rules and regulations?
- 4 The Church must uphold biblical truth and safeguard the true way passed on by the apostles. What relationship does this have to the development of theological thinking?

5 The Church is ecumenical (catholic). How do we then understand the reasonableness of the path of "self determination" in the Chinese Church?

6 The Church should be holy, but unholy things happen regularly in the earthly church. How shall we deal with these?

7 The Church should be one. Then why do we need to realize "mutual respect" in matters of faith?

8 The Church should be self-supporting. Is it possible then to use other methods of raising income beyond believers' contributions? Discussions centered primarily around the first five issues.

From April 5-7, 2000 a city-wide symposium of pastoral workers was held in the Qingpu district. Seventeen persons made presentations at this event and 20 others spoke as respondents. Bishop K.H. Ting took part and spoke on theological reconstruction to the 500 or so co-workers and lay workers present. The proceedings of this meeting were published as *Proceedings of the Symposium on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Three-Self and Theological Reconstruction*.

It was after this meeting that a Shanghai pastor, preaching on the topic "China Should be Transformed by the Gospel" said: "A Church that preaches the Gospel must preach signs and wonders; a Church that does not preach signs and wonders is not a true Church." This caused a great stir among colleagues and believers. As a result, co-workers decided to undertake study and discussion on how "signs" should be viewed. We affirm that we all believe in signs, but should our preaching of the gospel today be based only on this? How should we understand the miracles recorded in the Bible? Thirty short essays came out of this discussion, most of which were collected in the 3<sup>rd</sup> title in the Self-Propagation Study Series, *Pastoral Co-Workers Discuss Miracles*.

In the latter half of 2000, our discussions centered around the topic: "Christians (in China) are surrounded by many who do not believe in Christianity, how shall we view this situation from a biblical and theological point of view?" We discovered in the course of the discussion that the estrangement Christians feel toward the non-Christians around them stems from the influence of the theological idea that believers stand for good, while unbelievers stand for evil. This brings in the question of whether non-Christians can do good. Where do their good deeds come from? Do their good deeds have value in God's eyes; do they find favor with God? How can we explain theologically that all humans are sinful, but that all humans are also capable of good deeds? What is the Christian view of humanity? And so on. Our discussion of these issues is just beginning and it will take time before a deeper development is seen.

In the first six months of this year (2001), we held discussions with our Jiangsu colleagues on issues of common concern in order to share with and learn from them. We first called upon colleagues themselves to choose topics, for small group

discussions. Out of these small groups came 31 essays. Following this a larger symposium was held at which eight co-workers spoke.

Because transportation is less convenient for them and their issues are rather different, colleagues from the suburbs and outlying areas presently spend a day studying sharing with the larger gatherings twice a month.

## 2 Gleanings

*1 Discussion of the significance and necessity of theological reconstruction must be continued and motivation be kept up.*

Following the Jinan Meeting, colleagues praised theological reconstruction in informal discussions, but in actuality had no deep understanding of it. They spoke of it in generalities. Though commenting on the necessity for it, few people connected it concretely to their own work. Some colleagues had their own views about it, typically: 1) These are matters for seminary faculty, with little relation to me. I'm very busy with my work in the church, I don't read many theological books, it's not a subject for preaching and I don't need to get into abstruse theories; 2) There are some extreme negative phenomena in the church, but these are the doing of self-proclaimed evangelists, and there are not really many problems in our pulpits; 3) I worry that my faith may be affected; theological reconstruction is simply a matter of factions vying for prominence.

We aimed our explanations specifically at these issues; for example:

1 Every preacher, whether she is aware of it or not, has her own theology and this will naturally come out in her preaching. Study and discussion of theology is not only a matter for (professional) theologians, it is also some thing for all pastoral workers.

2 What is preached in our pulpits is certainly not the same as what some self-proclaimed evangelists are saying, but the influence of superstition, extreme negativism and world-denying thinking among believers is great; have we given attention to how to lead them to correct these errors? There are some problems which appear simple, but which are difficult to clarify without a deeper study of the Bible and exploration and discussion of theology.

3 Theology and faith are linked, yet not equivalent. Faith does not change, but just as Bishop Ting has said, revision of theological thinking is essential. Therefore, when considering different theological thinking, one should not simply put a label on it, but should listen carefully and ponder conscientiously.

4 The number of intellectuals in the church is growing and the rural church is gradually becoming less rural and more city- and county-oriented. If we do not raise the standard of preaching in our pulpits, it will be difficult to attract thinking people to Christianity.

We have also learned that the depreciation of or worry about theological reconstruction is not something that can be addressed through a few discussions. Thus, when problems arise, the concrete situation must be promptly brought to bear and facts. In one discussion of "spiritual vs. unspiritual," the situation in the church was brought up -- the fact that some believers think that the biblical phrase "dedicated to the Lord" means that contact with unbelievers should be avoided, even to the point of cutting off relations with family members, divorcing, etc. Others see the "dragon" symbol, a fortuitous sign in Chinese culture, as the devil, and even a "cat" is spoken of as the devil. All this shows that erroneous theology still plays its part. In order to raise the level of believers, preachers must first raise their own level.

### *2 When issues arise from reality, they arouse more interest.*

In discussion, we should approach theory gradually, through the deepening of issues as we go along. At the start, we raised eight issues and co-workers participated in discussion of those that they found of interest, in the style of "interest groups." Nothing much that was new came of the first sharing sessions. Later we gradually focused on the issue of "the spiritual and the secular," going rather deeper. In 2000, under the theme "church and society," we came up with some enlightening topics for reflection and asked colleagues not only to consider the issue in a straightforward way, but that they might integrate a variety of views from the Bible and actual church problems in their deliberations. For example: "the chosen people." Why must we still be concerned about the secular, about patriotism and being law-abiding? The church serves society; is this a tactic for survival and development or an essential witness of the church? "Obey those in authority over you" and "listen to God, not humans": are these two in conflict with one another? "Run the church democratically": how is this related to the fact that the church should follow the leading of the Holy Spirit?, etc.

As for how to treat people who do not believe in Christianity, after discussion, we found greater consensus on the following points: 1) We should affirm that there is goodness, beauty and truth outside the church, and that these also have their source in God. All humans are made in God's image and even after they sinned in Adam and fell, they did not entirely lose that image. Humans still have a conscience that distinguishes between right and wrong, and they have the desire for good. 2) Christians should not make themselves into judges, they should see their own failings on the path to holiness and learn from all that is good and beautiful. 3) God loves all humankind and Christians should treat everyone with love. This is an issue with many ramifications, for example: "good and evil" and "righteousness and sin": are these the same idea? What is the relationship between the two? We feel such questions need to be explored in greater depth and need to be guided by theological theory.

### *3 Create a freer atmosphere.*

Everyone should contribute to small group discussions; there should be no labeling, in seminars everyone should respond; there are no swift solutions to many questions, space should be left for further thought.

Theological reconstruction is a matter that lies within the realm of thought. We do not feel that it can be resolved by administrative order; empty talk has no real substance. Only by inspiring our colleagues to self-awareness so that they are willing to share their thinking can we mobilize all positive factors and change passivity to activity. As for alleviating our colleagues' anxieties, explanations are not enough, we can only demonstrate that this is not a case of one faction trying to put down another through real and free discussion.

It is necessary to have prepared statements on the main topic of a seminar, but if there is nothing more than speeches, the listeners will find it hard to stay focused and will be unable to express their opinions. So we have adopted the "free response" method to encourage everyone to join in. This is beneficial in mustering active participation by all. What comes out in the responses enriches the main topic; differing opinions and questions can open up new lines of thought, deepening the seminar. Even if there are no speeches, it is possible to gain inspiration through contact with other points of view. Seminars are used in scholarly activities internationally and we need to gain experience in doing this well in the course of theological reconstruction.

The 3rd title in the Self-Propagation Study Series published by the Shanghai CC/TSM is on miracles, signs and wonders. It simply sets out the short pieces written by pastoral workers during the seminar, without drawing any conclusions. The reader will discover consensus on some points, for example: 1) "Miracles" does not only refer to faith healing or certain signs. God's marvelous creation and the transformation that follows conversion are all signs; 2) The miracles recorded in the Bible had special goals and we should understand their spiritual meaning; 3) We believe in miracles, but we should not make too much of them, because Jesus did not use signs to make people believe in him. If these views can help ordinary believers not to make too much of miracles and signs and thus be led into fanatical faith tendencies, then they are useful. As for individuals whose views may differ, these can await a deeper exploration at a future date.

*4 We should encourage co-workers who take part, especially middle-aged and young ones, to spend more time in thinking about these issues and we should do more to publish their views and create the conditions to help them improve.*

Twice a month, the pastoral workers of Shanghai hold a seminar on theological reconstruction. Some of the participants (about 20) take part in a weekly enlarged discussion group on self-propagation. Together they study and decide on topics for discussion and are asked to do some preparation. In this kind of discussion, two persons are asked to speak each time, the rest respond at will, everyone speaks without reservation, and it is possible to move to a deeper level. This energy can then be brought to the larger discussion and serve to keep things on track.

When the co-workers from the suburbs and county level meet, there are six or seven each time who deliver prepared speeches which the whole meeting then discusses.

These co-workers are now more positive about theological reconstruction. They can say what is on their minds and we allow them more opportunities for study and sharing. Through preparation of speeches and writing of essays and so on, they serve as the mainstay of the enlarged sharing and study meetings; at the same time, they have gained through their participation.

*5 Through explanation and publicity, through training courses, our knowledge is then passed on to even more lay co-workers.*

Fengxian County in Shanghai has many Christians, churches and meeting points. Believers there also have a lot of confused theological notions received in the past from evangelists active in the area, such as an emphasis on believers vs. unbelievers and the sacred vs. the secular. Some openly say: "The good deeds of believers are like real flowers, the good deeds of unbelievers are like plastic flowers; they look nice, but are false." Others say, "The good deeds of unbelievers are like Satan pretending to be an angel of light." Some think that patriotism is unspiritual, and oppose having the flag hung in churches and meeting points, or holding meetings with applause in church, etc. Because of this, beginning in 1999 we held three special training courses in this county, one a year for 3 years, each with about 100 participants. The courses consisted primarily of Shanghai coworkers from the enlarged self-propagation study seminars giving talks on specialized topics such as "belief vs. unbelief"; "the spiritual and the secular"; "the church and society"; followed by group discussion. The participants sometimes did written homework, and through feedback and response, lecturers were able to explain at a deeper level, with quite good results.

Within the city, we also had a plan to speak on the significance of theological reconstruction to lay workers in each municipal district. In this way some errors were eliminated and concern for theological reconstruction grew among some co-workers.

### **3 Gains and areas for improvement**

#### **Gains:**

1 Discussion has been systematized. Co-workers have become accustomed to participating in regular study and discussion activities. Now about 50 professional clergy in Shanghai participate each week; in the suburbs and counties, the number is about 30. Those who had thought this was "nothing to do with me," now for the most part feel that the study and discussion are helpful and inspiring; anxiety has been reduced and thinking opened up. Some retired co-workers, even some over 90, voluntarily come to take part in discussions. The improvement in those taking part in the enlarged self-propagation group is even more evident.

2 Reflection in the pulpit. Some co-workers are able to naturally reflect what they have gleaned from theological discussions in their sermons, such as: rather more emphasis on God as love and that Christians should treat others with love; that faith and action should be one; that one cannot speak empty words about "the spiritual," etc. Some refer

to goodness, truth and beauty outside the church in their sermons and that Christians should pay attention to their own "orientation," etc. Christians have reflected that these sermons have something new to say, and extreme negative content in sermons (emphasis on belief vs. unbelief, the sacred vs. the secular, etc.) has been greatly decreased. This is a self-conscious adjustment by co-workers. Our feeling is that as long as the individual can see some improvement on his original foundation, this should be welcomed.

3 In addition to publishing a special issue on the seminar in 2000, the Shanghai CC/TSM, published three titles in the Self-Propagation Study Series. On *Bible Codes*, which begins with a discussion of the Bible and eschatology, was prepared for the Jinan Meeting. *Explorations in Spirituality* is a discussion of the spiritual vs. secular issue; *Pastoral Workers Speak about Miracles* presents opinions on signs and shares some thoughts on them. We hope that such booklets on specialized topics will not only record the fruits of colleagues' reflections, but serve as theological guides for believers and lay workers.

### **Areas for Improvement:**

1 Planning is inadequate. Theological reconstruction is still at an exploratory stage. Assessment takes place at each step, but an overall plan is lacking. We need to consider how to move forward in a situation where most co-workers have been mobilized; otherwise it will be difficult to go deeper.

2 The level of discussion is not deep enough. Coworkers have not yet made theological reconstruction the center of their work, they do not read enough, ponder deeply enough, write enough; all this means it is difficult for there to be much improvement.

3 Participation in the study seminars is not broad enough. Participants at present are mainly clergy, but there are many retired and elderly co-workers, lay elders and lay preachers preaching in the pulpits of Shanghai who have not yet had any contact with theological reconstruction. This being the case, it is difficult to bring about fundamental change in the guidance given to believers.

We hope that through this time of sharing with colleagues from Jiangsu, we will be inspired to strive better to move forward!

From *Symposium on Theological Reconstruction in Shanghai and Jiangsu* Shanghai: Shanghai TSM/CC, 2001, 120-127.

# **Theological Reconstruction in Jiangsu**

ZHANG KEYUN

## **1 Unite Thinking and Increase Knowledge**

In order to thoroughly implement the "Resolution on Developing Theological Reconstruction" passed by the TSPM/ CCC in a timely manner, the Jiangsu CC/TSM began with a Working Conference on Self-Support in late November 1998. The meeting studied how best to initiate the work of theological reconstruction in the province of Jiangsu without delay. Fifty-two colleagues took part in the meeting on the topic: Why is theological reconstruction necessary? There was a lively discussion on the evidence for the necessity, urgency and reasonableness of theological reconstruction. The consensus reached was that theological reconstruction is necessary for the self-construction of the church; for the deepening of the three-self patriotic principle; to resist overseas anti-China forces that continue to use Christianity to interfere in China; for the adaptation of the church to socialist society; and to witness to God's message in these times. These five points fully illustrate the urgency, necessity and reasonableness of theological reconstruction, and such an understanding provides a solid intellectual basis for its development.

## **2 Clarify the Main Task; Establish Basic Principles and Methods**

Reaching a consensus on the importance of theological reconstruction and gaining a common understanding does not in itself ensure success in this work. It is necessary to clarify for all participants the main task, principles and methods of our present theological reconstruction, and through conscientious study and discussion, we came to a consensus on the following:

1 Theological reconstruction is a needed correction of traditional, old or backward theology; it also means a new exposition of the new experience of the Chinese Church before God over the past 50 years and the establishment of a system of theology based on Chinese characteristics which can guide the building up of the Chinese Church and the spiritual growth and seeking of Chinese Christians.

2 In the course of theological reconstruction, we must be aware that:

The conditions for theological reconstruction are no offense against and represent no change in basic Christian faith; and that upholding the adaptation to socialist society means advocating a multiplicity of views and opposing any sort of dictatorial approach;

The object of theological reconstruction is to get rid of old theology received from the missionaries, and thinking tainted by colonialism, imperialism, anti-Communism and antisocialism that does not adapt to socialist society and modern progress;

The basic corps for carrying out theological reconstruction is the broad mass of patriotic pastoral workers, staff and students of theological schools and those pastoral workers

and believers with a certain level of education, a level of scholarship, religious knowledge, rich experience and capacity for intellectual work;

Conflict among different theological viewpoints must be absolutely avoided, as must either criticism or special treatment for any particular point of view. The crux of theological reconstruction is whether it can give expression to a pure Christian faith and whether it can adapt to socialist society;

We do not ape foreign models, but uphold using foreign things for China while maintaining our selfhood; we are not in thrall to the past, but use it for today's needs.

### **3 Define the Themes of Theological Reconstruction**

Definition of themes is a means by which people can be organized and guided in their involvement in the important issues of theological reconstruction. When defining these themes, our approach is to "grasp the large and dispense with the minor," focusing on a grasp of issues which are universal and have some particularity. Primarily these are as follows:

Are human beings completely depraved and without any goodness, entirely mired in sin and evil? Are all functions of human reason the work of the devil, all marked as sin by God?

Is human meaning like soiled clothing, sin upon sin? Is everything ordained by God such that whether humans do good works or bad, all is useless and without value? Are all material things evil? Is the whole world in the hand of the evil one? Is it in submission to the devil? Is certain destruction its end?

Are all rules and regulations, methods, systems and organizations of humans and not of God; are they opposed to God and obstacles to the work of the Spirit? Is the intuition of "spiritual" people the will of God? Those who do not heal by faith or perform exorcism, do not speak in tongues, see visions or dreams, dance or sing in a spiritual trance -- have they not been blessed with grace?

Can there be no contact or cooperation between believers and unbelievers? Must believers and unbelievers be separate and not joined together? Does separate mean holy and joined together mean sin?

Are believers citizens of heaven who must hear only to God and not humanity? Is the church spiritual and not under the jurisdiction of this world? Must individual Christians and the church as a whole not heed the government, not accept its leading or regulation, and if they walk with the Communist Party, do they fall into unrighteousness and find themselves in opposition to God?

Is it true that Christians cannot be patriotic, cannot take an interest in politics? Is patriotism secular and politics evil? Can love for the church and love for the country be in harmony?

Is God's revelation once and for all? Will there be no new revelation? How shall we treat the idea of God's revelation as "gradual and developmental"?

Must preachers and believers focus on prayer and evangelism, abandoning all else; if not, do they fail to serve God? Are all work, study and achievement simply like clouds floating in the sky, evanescent and without value?

The participants choose the topic to be repeatedly studied and revised; one person could concentrate on one topic or many. Participants disperse, and then gather together and form groups around the various topics for discussion and prepare written statements.

#### **4 Main Resources for Theological Reconstruction**

Through discussion, everyone comes to understand the importance and necessity of theological reconstruction, and that all efforts should be made to develop it and to work for its success. We have become aware that this requires not only subjective conditions: our ability to put in the effort, but objective ones: rich resources. Through study and analysis, we have reached the consensus that in doing theological reconstruction we are not without these resources.

Firstly, in the 50 years of the Three-Self Movement, we have had not only hardship, but have also tasted God's abundant grace. The experiences, light and revelation of these 50 years are our most precious and important resource for theological reconstruction today.

Second, through 50 years of service, we now have a large number of clergy of a definite standard with attainments in scholarship, theology and Bible, and we should not underestimate the strength of this resource.

Third, even more precious is that we have yet with us a group of loyal servants of God of the older generation of church workers who love church and love country and have walked closely with God. This is a strong resource for theological reconstruction which cannot be either replaced or dispensed with.

Fourth, erroneous teachings of foreign infiltrators, their ideas and old, conservative backward theology from history provide negative object lessons for theological reconstruction, and there are still quite a few of them around.

Fifth, there is something else that has always played a very important role and that is that God has provided for our Chinese Church an incomparable external environment;

not only can our theological reconstruction grow freely in such an expansive environment, but we have government understanding, sympathy and firm support.

These five aspects are precious rich resources as we undertake theological reconstruction and guarantee its success. Through analysis, we are infused with zeal, our confidence is increased, and we are able to go forward confident of victory.

## **5 Draft a Solid, Achievable Plan**

Theological reconstruction is an enormous project, one that cannot be achieved simply relying upon subjective imagination. It is an important project with high goals, standards and demands and cannot be borne along by sheer force of energy. It must begin bit by bit, step by step, moving along on a solid footing. Thus there must be planning, steps to be followed, organized movement. The key to all this lies in achieving a balance between a number of seeming opposites:

Fast vs. slow. Whether to move quickly or slowly cannot be decided subjectively. Speed cannot always be achieved. Progress might seem slow, but not necessarily be so. We are fully aware that theological reconstruction must follow certain objective laws. Thus, our proposed policy of "active, reliable, steady, gradual" as the guiding thinking for this work. For administrative purposes, it has been expressed as: "Small but continual steps moving reliably and gradually, accumulating small successes into large ones." This is figurative, but accurate. Two-plus years of implementation have shown that this is a correct guide. It may seem unsatisfying or too timid, but in fact, progress has not been slow, but has kept a steady speed and achieved visible results.

Short-term and long-term. We focused our attention on long-term goals as well as short-term goals. Long-term goals must be based upon small concrete ones. Once long-term goals are set, short-term goals must be scientifically set on these preconditions in order to guarantee the smooth completion of long-term goals. Short-term goals should have clear concrete tasks and timetables, pushing the work actively toward the goal. A set timetable is necessary and helpful even if the goals are not achieved strictly on time.

Breadth vs. depth; popularization vs. a rise in standards. These two represent a unity of contradictions, they cannot be polarized. Without a definite level of popularization and breadth, we cannot have depth and a rise in standards. The latter two are built upon a base of popularization and breadth. Theological reconstruction cannot all at once achieve high standards and a high quality of writings. If we have over-inflated and unrealistic demands and an excess of confidence, we could be headed for failure and disappointment, especially in the face of the reality of a Chinese Church which in the course of one hundred years has yet to build up its own theological system. Therefore, at this beginning stage we must firmly grasp how to open up theological reconstruction broadly.

The critical point at this stage is "participation as the center" -- how to attract more pastoral workers and related colleagues and fellow Christians to join in. Of course this

broadening and popularizing is also a process of gradual opening up, of gradual expansion. On the basis of this breadth and popularization, the organizers must focus on the issues of depth and higher standards, while at the same time focusing on finding good seedlings in the whole process -- colleagues with the gift of good writing who can be organized to contribute their strength to deepening theological reconstruction. As organizers, especially in the beginning, popularizing stage, we should pay close attention to finding those talents who can further deepen theological reconstruction, forming a corps of such people, so that the process of deepening goes forward and moves unceasingly toward laying a foundation for the construction of a theological system with Chinese characteristics. At present, there are some 40 theological reconstruction activists in Jiangsu, mostly young and middle-aged pastors with a great deal of potential.

How to bring the early fruits of theological reconstruction into our sermons and pulpits in a timely manner is another issue related to the goals of the movement. Even a small amount of fruit must be swiftly translated into spiritual guides for believers and guides for the church's service. The Jiangsu CC/TSM has organized publicity teams and published *Food for the Spirit* to provide conditions and opportunities for just such a purpose. This is popularization and at the same time a continuous development and deepening.

## **6 Current State of Progress**

From the first study seminar on theological reconstruction held by the Jiangsu CC and TSM in March 1999 until the present, four such seminars have been held, with over 280 participants; for example, the seminar held in December 2000 had 91 in attendance. Two hundred sixty-eight theological essays were submitted at these seminars, with 119 of these shared in the plenary sessions, and over 40 published in periodicals such as *Tian Feng, Voice of the Gospel* and *CCCITSPM News*. In addition, over 110 were collected from Bible schools and seminaries.

In late April 2001, the provincial CC/TSM began a program of such seminars in the large cities. Each city set up a small group for the promotion of theological reconstruction consisting of a chairperson and general secretary from the TSM and a president and secretary general from the CC, to be responsible for the work of theological reconstruction in the city. Up to the present, study seminars have been held in four large cities, for example in May in Suzhou, the clergy submitted 80 papers; in Kunshan, 30 papers were submitted; 34 were submitted at a study seminar in Nantong held June 1-2. Lively preparations are underway in other cities for seminars to be held in June and July (2001).

The provincial CC/TSM's priority is in research work, the work of improving quality, preparation of teaching materials for Bible schools and two lay training centers, as well as carrying the fruits of theological reconstruction forward (as described above), improving literature work, the publication of *Voice of the Gospel* and *Food for the Spirit*, publicity work, etc. At present publicity is carried out mostly by the large cities with the

provincial CC/TSM lending ideas, aiding in organizational work and dealing with submission of papers. The provincial and directly-administered municipality levels of the two organizations divide the work clearly, each with its own focus, moving forward in cooperation.

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# Understanding Theological Reconstruction in the Chinese Church

A Hermeneutical Approach

WANG AIMING

## 1 Introduction

If we view the present work of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church as a speech event, we can begin with an analysis of the text, thereby understanding its background and causes. Moreover, clarifying the intentions and aspirations behind this speech phenomenon through a general analysis, we can proceed in an unhurried way to make an analysis of the connectedness among all sorts of interrelated items among general concepts and contexts. Approaching this speech event directly, we will discover that the basic line of thought underlying it, in terms of appearance and field of meaning, is helpful to our understanding and appeals to an understanding of words and phrases, whether descriptively or a priori.

Pierre Buhler notes that in Gerhard Ebeling's hermeneutics, theology is not an abstract exercise with itself as goal: it certainly cannot be said that theology is for theology's sake, as people speak of art for art's sake. For Ebeling, it is only insofar as it serves the divine speech which constitutes its intrinsic field that theology possesses substantive meaning. This is why theology is always connected to proclamation, as he emphasizes by making it part of the title of one of his works: *Theology and Proclamation*. After listing the essential topics in theology, he again stresses two topics especially characteristic of theology: Theology is indispensable in giving to the preacher the duty to preach and theology is indispensable in making itself ultimately dispensable, while making the proclamation of divine speech indispensable. Ebeling also says that the standard for theology is proclamation.<sup>1</sup> In understanding what Ebeling's hermeneutics has to say to us, what is most important is this: If theological study does not have the proclamation of Christ at its core, such theology is blind, if the proclamation of Christ is separated from theology, it is empty proclamation.

Again, interpretations of the same text according to the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur will necessarily produce a variety of different interpretations, such that the opposite interpretation is always present. Our paths to interpreting the world of the text must necessarily be pluralistic as well. The reader must first of all strive to understand the existential meaning of the world of the text in order to interpret the subjective reality of the world of interpretation of the interpreter him or herself. Ricoeur says that the interpretation of the text and the interpretation of the interpreter's life always correspond and are mutually adjusted. Thus when we read the text world of any interpreter, there are at least two levels of basic structural factors, and when two readings and acts of understanding of the same text coexist, the understanding which comes to us, through its abundant and expanded meaning, possesses an ambiguity and inner tension of the interpreter's understanding. This is the "conflict of interpretations" of theological hermeneutics.<sup>2</sup>

Entering into the thinking behind these two hermeneutical approaches will take us into our topic of understanding theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church. Our discussion will cover three aspects: 1) The necessary preparation for understanding theological reconstruction-clarification of thinking, 2) 15 topics related to the work of theological reconstruction; and 3) A suggested path for understanding.

## **2 Groundwork for understanding the ministry of theological reconstruction: Clarifying Thinking**

*The Work of Theological Reconstruction and the Proclamation of the Word of God; that is, the Mission of the Church.*

In 1984, Bishop K.H. Ting posed three questions facing theological education in the Chinese Church, along with several basic directions to guide its work: 1) How shall we be loyal to the Bible? 2) How shall we be loyal to the teachings of the historical church? 3) How shall we adapt to the new face of China? Over the past 20 years, the Chinese Church has basically followed the path described by Bishop Ting in carrying forward its guiding work. However, from the vantage of the highest levels of the Chinese Church, it has been far from successful. In the message preached by the majority of our Chinese clergy, there exists across the board a closed-minded view of the Bible. In all facets of the church's work, we have not yet managed to give full play to the unique thinking of the Chinese Church so that it may make its own unique contribution to the church ecumenical. Though the number of believers is increasingly rapidly, marginalization remains their chief external characteristic. In autumn 1998 the Chinese Church passed the resolution on "Strengthening Theological Reconstruction" at its Jinan meeting, and furthermore proposed that "To run the church well according to the three-self principle, we must give full play to the guiding role of theology in building up the church." At the same time, the idea that "Theology is the church in the act of thinking" (K.H. Ting) took its place as a clear theological understanding in the church. In this way, an extremely important message gradually became the focus of attention in the church; that is, that we must ponder our actions and responsibilities from the standpoint of the mission of the church.

This is a basic path to understanding the work of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church. If we look at it hermeneutically, we can assemble a number of fundamental points: 1) The aim of theology is proclamation; 2) Theology is the church thinking; 3) Biblical principles and the heritage of the historical church are related to the development and progress of our nation. To put it another way, theological propositions and thinking in the Chinese Church are entering a period of awakening and, and through the work of theological reconstruction, will become a unique component of the experience and heritage of the historical church.

*"The three-self principle" and the heritage of the historical church.*

In attempting to understand the work of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church, it is essential to clarify the definition of the three-self principle, for all the slander

and misunderstanding directed toward the Chinese Church is related to the interpretation of this principle. Firstly, our Chinese clergy is very clear that the "three-self principle" is not the same thing as our basic faith. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed set out the fundamentals of the faith of the Chinese Church; the "three-self principle" is not mentioned in these creeds. The three-self principle is the working principle of the Chinese Church. The Chinese Church upholds the three-self principle in order to make the Chinese Church well run. As Bishop Ting put it: Three-Self is "but the scaffolding of the building in the construction process. ... As soon as this building of the body of Christ is completed, standing uniquely on the horizon, the scaffold will disappear"

Thus, in attempting to understand theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church, we will see why, from a historical point of view, the Church's insistence on theological reconstruction as a continuation and deepening of adherence to the three-self principle means running the church even better in a new historical context. Seen within the scope of church history, an accurate understanding of the contribution of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church to the historical church lies in what, for the Chinese Church, constitutes this heritage, that is, its method of witness to Jesus Christ. In this, the experience of the Chinese Church is shaping a distinctive praxis in the history of the ecumenical church. One of my own visions is that one day, when the Chinese Church with Christ as its head is firmly established, three-self will become a unique term of praise for our Lord in the Chinese Church. Today, there are those in the overseas Chinese churches who hurtfully call the Chinese Church the "three-self church," and belittle Chinese theological propositions as "three-self theology," and even call the seminaries preparing our future evangelists "three-self or 'Kaiser' seminaries." If we look at this from the hermeneutical principle of "conflict of interpretations," of differing understandings of three-self as a text-world, all sorts of internal logical propositions and values of the readers are revealed, and from their different readings we see their self-definitions and the political and social choices and value orientations that result.

### *Theological Reconstruction and the Selfhood of the Chinese Church.*

In early 1999, when I returned from Switzerland to serve the Chinese Church, it was with a high degree of enthusiasm and confidence that I focused on the comprehensive theological reflection then underway in the Chinese Church. I spent nearly that whole early spring reading all the documents and theological treatises of the church, especially *Love Never Ends* [referring to the Chinese versioned.]. I felt that in this act of rethinking, the Chinese Church was beginning to deal with existing basic questions that concerned whether the church could be part of the modernization process the nation was then entering upon. These questions could be subsumed and described under a group of categories and one could attempt to find a necessary balance among them. These categories are: the secular and the spiritual; this life and the eternal; knowledge and faith; love for one's own and love for others; etc. That is to say, the issue is one of finding a balance between the spiritual and the secular.

What then is the most important point of equilibrium for the Chinese Church? My own position is that only by returning to the core issues of the Reformation will we be able to transcend the limitations resulting from the period of control by the mission boards of the major western denominations in the 19th century. These were issues of domination and superiority, just as a core issue of the Reformation period was what is meant by the "power" question. In 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe, the conflict between the authority of the church and the authority of the King took shape in Lutheran theology as one of Vatican authority vs. biblical authority. *Sola Scriptura* was the breakthrough, opening up a historical stage of Christian faith. The Swiss theologian Eric Fuchs says that the central issue of the Reformation was authority, that is, how do we critique authority when speaking in faith terms? The answer is that authority is not a secular thesis of the church, for such a judgment harbors an all-too-common historical error. The only authority is the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit and witnessing to the self-revelation of God.<sup>5</sup> As for the Chinese Church, presently growing and developing, the issue of "balance," can also be understood as an issue of "authority." And inherent in this issue of "authority" is the mission of the church. Thus, consideration of what sort of view of the Bible should be established has become the point of departure for theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church.

When contemplating how the Bible should be viewed, we begin to see a Chinese Church in which selfhood is gradually taking shape. The principle of selfhood in the Chinese Church is the principle of self-determination. In all aspects of the ministry of the church, especially in theological thinking, the principle of selfhood enables the Chinese Church to make a unique witness in keeping with Chinese society and cultural context. Thus, in understanding the work of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church, we also need to pay attention to the formation and development of the church's self-consciousness. Only in this way can we honor the will and proposals of the Chinese Church in international exchanges, only then will the unique theological propositions and standpoints of the Chinese Church not be slandered and misunderstood as political.

### **3 Fifteen Basic Propositions Related to the Work of Theological Reconstruction**

If we treat the work of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church as a text world waiting to be read and understood, we will certainly come up against a problem: which issues in the work of theological reconstruction bear upon theological thinking in the Chinese Church? Furthermore, in the comparatively long period that stretches before us, which are the issues that will have a substantive effect on the work of the church? Here I will attempt to summarize, from among the many issues under consideration, especially among church leaders, since the "Qingpu Meeting" in the summer of 1999, when the work of theological reconstruction was begun, 15 propositions which I feel are basic to the work of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church, and thus help international church friends and colleagues to gain a rough understanding of our basic position and thinking. In other words, along a hermeneutical line of thought, these 15 propositions make up the text of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church.

1 God is love and all God's attributes, such as justice or compassion, are rooted in love, God's paramount divine attribute.

2 Christ is cosmic in His nature; or, we might also say the nature of His Lordship over all creation is cosmic.

3 God's revelation is gradual and progressive, as is human understanding of God.

4 God's work of creation is ongoing.

5 Seek a proper understanding of "justification by grace through faith" that does not lead to the nullification of good deeds or morality.

6 Affirm that Truth, Goodness and Beauty created by God exist not only in the visible church (the Chinese Church), but also outside it.

7 Human beings are a work-in-progress in God's creation. Martin Luther says we are all in an unfinished state.

8 To establish a correct understanding of the Bible requires us to anchor ourselves in the supreme authority of the Scriptures and in the two basic Creeds of the Church (Apostle's Creed and Nicene Creed), and to study and to preach the Word of God in response to the context of Chinese society. In other words, the most important ministry of the Chinese Church and the most important study of the Gospel ministry in China is how to establish a proper view of the Bible.

9 At China's current stage of social development, it is imperative that the moral aspect of Christianity be amplified to its greatest extent.

10 It is insufficient to expound the Three-Self Principle merely in light of the historical background of imperialism and the corresponding Western missionary movement. Our understanding of the Three-Self Principle shall be grounded in biblical and doctrinal evidences, with reference to its profound meaning in the history of Christian faith as a whole.

11 The positive contributions of many Western missionaries to China should not be denied. It is unacceptable to brand all Western missionaries as imperialists and dismiss their contributions.

12 Efforts shall be made to adjust religious viewpoints and actively bring about the adaptation of Christian faith with socialist Chinese society. The aim is to bring the Church in China out of its marginal position and into that of a moving force contributing to Chinese social development.

13 In administration, the direction should be toward a democratically run church. The Church is seriously concerned with avoiding the patriarchal and autocratic models

prevalent in the Church and is determined to change this situation to bring about healthy development.

14 Theological reconstruction in China is founded on the following principle: the fundamentals of our faith are unchangeable, but theological thinking can be adjusted.

15 Theological reconstruction in China shall follow three basic principles: a) Upholding the Bible and its supreme authority, and a better understanding of the fundamentals of our faith; b) Prevention of factionalism in the Chinese Church-no one shall be permitted to use theological reconstruction to belittle those who hold different views, and c) Effective mobilization of the work of evangelism in China.

#### **4 A guide to understanding**

*How our sister churches in partnership can enter the text world of the Chinese Church.*

In scholarly terms, my personal feeling is that once the text-world is fully understood, the internal world of understanding of the reader should be entered into. From the standpoint of our relationships with churches internationally, the most important consideration is that we should make our views clear to our partners, but perhaps we have no way to enable them to completely accept our positions and standpoints at a single stroke. Thus, I would like here to raise seven points as suggested means to understanding theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church and offer them to our international church friends for their consideration:

1 The *Sitz im Leben* of theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church;

2 The entire historical pattern of theology from the entry of Protestantism into China until the present;

3 Respect the special form of Chinese Christians' witness to Christ;

4 Respect the fact that the Chinese Church is still coming into its inheritance from the historical church, and especially the unique form by which this inheritance is received;

5 The special feelings of Chinese Christians for the Bible;

6 Theology is intellectually applied in three ways in the Chinese Church: (a) Lessons and doctrine from the historical church (traditional western); (b) Understanding and interpretation from classical Chinese culture; and (c) Today's modernized models of interpretation, or what may be called the pluralistic value orientation model of understanding in the world (global and secular) context;

7 The changing make-up of the body of Chinese Christians: (a) the majority of rural Christians with their solid emotional grounding in love of God, (b) intellectuals with a clear civil consciousness who show their love of God in a sense of responsibility and

participation; and (c) the urban middle classes, a substantial number of whom were led to convert to Christ through spiritual seeking.

### *We Need to See Clearly our Own Situation and Challenges*

On observation of the actual situation of our Church in China, the urgency of theological reconstruction comes from the need to improve the imbalances and abnormalities in our ministry. Allow me to list concrete issues in a question format:

1 Churches have been built in many places in China, but isn't the church in believers' hearts far from being realized?

2 How can Chinese clergy, in a modernizing China, take up the burden of their mission to spread God's holy word? What is the overall quality of our clergy?

3 If we have a vision for the Chinese Church where the CCC becomes a church in which all Chinese churches are united, will all denominational backgrounds be truly willing, on the basis of respect for each other's differences, to join together in this united church?

4 As the church's self-consciousness is awakening and being formed in the context of the market economy of the civil society, isn't it imperative that the Chinese Church reflect on the new spiritual challenges the new era will pose for pastoral workers and believers?

### **5 Conclusion: Prospects and Confidence**

What are the prospects for theological reconstruction in the Chinese Church? We feel that in terms of principle, there are at least three important points or guidelines for this difficult and vast task:

1 Lead and guide upward, turn to Christ and build a Chinese Church with Christ as its Head,

2 Send roots downward, anchoring a church firmly grounded in Scripture and in the traditions of the Church, especially in the principles and teachings of the New Testament Church, while at the same time drawing broadly on all the superior concepts and models of the historical church which can be of benefit to the Chinese Church, in order to build that church up as an independent, self-determined church;

3 Move forward on all sides, expand and push forward in all aspects of the church's ministry and life: practicality.

Based on the text of talks given at a sharing session on Ministry in the Chinese Church under the auspices of the China Leadership Exchange (CLE) in Pasadena, CA, Sept. 2001 and Feb. 2002.

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1 Gerhard Ebeling, *Wort and Glaube I*, pp. 447ff. Quoted in "Parole de Dieu et hermeneutique, Introduction a la pensee de Gerhard Ebeling," by Pierre Buhler, *Irenikon* (4/1997): 457.

2 Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 376.

3 K.H. Ting, "On Theological Education in China," *Nanjing Theological Review* (New Series) (9/1984): 46.

4 \_\_\_\_, "Another Look at Three-Self," in *Love Never Ends* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 106.

5 Eric Fuchs, "Actualite de l'ethique protestante," in *Etudes theologique et religieuse*, vol. 68 (1993/2), 203-21 2.

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