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Chinese Theological Review: Vol. 12

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From the Editor

The Sixth National Christian Conference which took place in Beijing 29 Dec. 1996 - 2 Jan. 1997 saw the election of a new leadership for both the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (TSPM) following the retirement of Bishop K.H. Ting, who had served as head of both bodies concurrently for fifteen years. The new President of the CCC Council is Dr. Wenzao Han and the new Chairperson of the TSPM, Mr. Luo Guanzong. Both the outgoing and the incoming leadership expressed the themes of the Conference as upholding Three-Self and running the church well. Bishop Ting, in his greetings to the Conference, stated two hopes for the church in future: that it achieve greater unity and that it stress ethics and morality. These have been consistent themes in Bishop Ting's writing and speaking. Greater unity is essential to strengthen the post-denominational Chinese church, while a stress on ethics and morality provides balance to what has been a rather narrow focus on salvation. The themes of the Conference and the hopes of Bishop Ting are echoed in many of the sermons, speeches and presentations included here.

The National Conference, held every five years, receives the Work Report detailing accomplishments and problems since the previous Conference, elects new Standing Committees for both national bodies, passes resolutions, etc. One of the actions taken at this meeting was the revision and adoption of the "Chinese Christian Church Order". This new order will be promulgated nationally to provide a model for churches at the provincial and local levels who are urged to base their own orders on it. It should be studied as the Chinese church's contribution to ecumenical thinking on church unity and the nature of the church. For comparison, the Church Order for Trial Use can be found in CTR: 1991, pp. 21-30.

Material and spiritual civilization - the "two civilizations" - are watchwords for the Chinese authorities' vision of modernization and progress for the nation. The concept of spiritual civilization frequently mentioned in these pages should not be misconstrued as spirituality in the Christian sense but rather as an effort to promote socialist ethical and cultural progress. The Conference adopted a resolution endorsing a Communist Party resolution on the subject, emphasizing the positive contribution Christianity could make to this enterprise through its ethical and moral doctrines.

The meeting held group discussions and heard reports on work in five general areas: self-propagation and the task for theology; self-support and international sharing; self-government and the new Church Order; relationships with churches overseas; and the Christian contribution to China's spiritual civilization. Presentations were also made by individual delegates responding to these issues as well as detailing local experience, problems and achievements. Three of these presentations have been included here: on women's work; the church at the grassroots and self-support problems in mountain areas.

In addition to the materials from the National Conference, an essay oil methods of Bible interpretation in China and three sermons round out this issue.

The Chinese text for all pieces from the Conference can be found in *Documents of the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference,* Publications Office of the CCC and TSPM, Shang-

hai, 1997. Sources for other texts are given at the end of each piece. I would like to thank the authors of essays and sermons included here, Mr. Chen Yongtao of the Publications Department of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, and Gail Coulson, lan Groves, Philip Wickeri and Wu Enyang for contributing their translation skills. Unattributed translations are my own. Thanks once again to Mrs. Cecilia Ip for help in layout and production, and as always, to Dr. Marvin Hoff and Mrs. Joanne Hoff and the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia.

Since the *Chinese Theological Review is* aimed at a mainly overseas readership, Chinese characters are printed in the traditional, rather than the simplified, form. The China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Church in China are abbreviated as CCC and TSPM throughout these pages.

Janice Wickeri Hong Kong

The Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference

Greetings to the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference - K.H. Ting

So many of us, co-workers and fellow believers, have gathered here in Beijing from all across the nation to consult together about the important business of our church, and especially to look ahead at the next five or even more years of our work. For so many years, the United Front Department and the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council have given us considerable help. Their delegates are able to be with us today and we would like to welcome them and express our gratitude.

Lately I have been thinking about this Conference, our sixth, and the fact that the third, fourth and fifth Conferences have all been held in the last sixteen years. Yet during the thirty years from the inception of the Three-Self Movement to the end of the Cultural Revolution, we held only two Conferences, the first and the second. Only two Conferences in thirty years and four within the space of fifteen years - this shows that since the end of the Cultural Revolution, with reform and openness in China, the nation is thriving and there is peace in the land, which means that our religious work can also proceed normally: we can meet every five years, which is normal. Our church can undertake its work in a very normal fashion - this is linked to the destiny of our country.

To my knowledge, as we open this national Conference, the average age of delegates has fallen, exactly how much probably has not yet been worked out, but we can say with certainty that it has fallen by more than five years. For, if it had fallen by only five years, that would mean that in fact it had not fallen at all, because in another five years, we would all be that much older. That the average age of delegates has fallen considerably also shows that more young co-workers and fellow believers are entering the leadership of the Chinese church. The unfortunate thing is that the number of women delegates has not increased much. The majority of Chinese Christians are women, but when a meeting such as this one is Convened, the percentage of women delegates is not high. I believe that we can further increase the numbers of women delegates in future at the seventh and eighth Conferences. Among the delegates here today, one has come the farthest - from Scotland. He was one of our students at Nanjing Theological Seminary, later served the church in Guangxi, and then pursued advanced studies at a seminary in Scotland. He returned to Beijing from Scotland yesterday to participate in our national Conference. He is Fan Yong, and we are very happy to be able to welcome him today.

The aim of our Conference, I think, is very similar to that of Conferences past. First, to uphold three-self, and second, to sincerely and wholeheartedly work to run the church well.

It is my particular hope that this Conference can fully embody the spirit of unity. You are all aware of Jonathan Chao in Hong Kong, who specializes in rumors attacking China, and attacking Our Three-Self Patriotic Movement in particular. On December 13, about two weeks ago, he made an announcement to the press, or shall we say, he put out a rumor, to the effect that at this national conference in Beijing K.H. Ting would retire - well, that was not a rumor. But he went on to say that the two national Christian bodies would split, with the TSPM on one side and the CCC on the other. In the past, one person had been both Chair (of the TSPM) and President (of

the CCC) which meant the two were not split. But with Ting stepping down, there would be one person as Chair of the TSPM and a different person as President of the CCC. This would show that the Chinese church could no longer maintain its unity and would be split from now on. This serves to tell us how willing those who oppose us - our enemies - are that we should be split. They never fail to dress up their own desires as truth. This being the case, we must increase our efforts at unity. Changes in our leadership at this time are purely the result of the law of necessity - the new replacing the old. There is not a hint of a split involved. If my retirement were to bring about a split, I wouldn't be so stupid as to suggest it - I would be willing to continue in order to avoid a split. But I am going to retire, and furthermore, all sides involved in the deliberation process have been sympathetic to my request to retire, which shows that we are united and not in danger of splitting. As far as I know, the new working group, like that of the past, is entirely united. When our enemies want us to split, when we see articles such as the one by Jonathan Chao, we want to step up our defense of our unity, so that our China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement, from the national to the provincial to the local levels, can be united as one to do our work well.

In addition, I hope that this meeting will see new developments in the area of Chinese Christian theological construction, that it can recover what the Bible teaches us, that is, that Christianity should be a religion that stresses ethics and morality. We are not willing to see anyone among us Christians who opposes morality or ethics, like those who promote antinomianism, saying morality is worthless, or those who say that Christianity does not promote morality and so on. Most people know that all religions encourage people to do good. Goodness is an extremely important characteristic which any religion emphasizes, and Christianity does not want to be an exception. Christianity should exalt goodness and clearly distinguish between good and evil, truth and falsehood. I would not want to sec a Chinese Christianity which did not stress morality. The Bible too emphasizes morality: six of the ten commandments are about morality. If I were to express a hope as I retire, a hope for Chinese Christianity, it would be: 1) that it be united, and 2) that it stress ethics and morality. This is not only a demand that our religious faith places upon us, but one that our nation and Party also require of us. Particularly at this time as the Party asks us to focus our attention on constructing spiritual civilization and on morality in thinking. There is not the slightest conflict here with our Christianity. Christianity should care for spiritual civilization, should promote ethics and morality. I hope that in future our Christianity will become a religion which increasingly has a high moral level and will oppose incidents such as those in some places where the name of Christianity is used to perpetrate immorality.

I have been Chairperson of the TSPM and President of the CCC for three five-year terms - fifteen years - and now as I am about to retire. I especially want to thank, on my own behalf, the many Christians in many places all over the country for the support they have given me. I know that many Christians throughout the country pray for me. The prayers of so many become a physical strength, this I have felt deeply and I want to thank them all. In these fifteen years, I have received many letters, and many co-workers and fellow Christians have visited me, hoping I could solve various problems. I have not been able to solve all their problems satisfactorily and I want to take the opportunity today to apologize and ask their forgiveness.

That is all I have to say, except to thank you all for listening.

Bishop K.H. Ting retired as Chairperson of the TSPM and President of the CCC at the Sixth National Christian Conference, where he addressed the delegates on 29 December 1996.

Build Up the Body of Christ with One Heart and United Effort: Running the Church Even Better According to the Three-Self Principle - Wenzao Han

Work Report of the Standing Committees of the
Fifth Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant
Churches in China and the Third Chinese Christian
Council, Presented at the Sixth National
Chinese Christian Conference

Chairman, Delegates,

I have been entrusted with the task of delivering the work report of the Standing Committees of the Fifth National Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China and the Third China Christian Council for your approval.

In modern and recent history, the Chinese people, as part of' which we here were all born and raised, has experienced grave disasters and suffered severe humiliation. God has so ordained, that under the leadership of the Communist party, the Chinese people have given their all to combat these afflictions and now stands like a towering giant in the East. After embarking upon the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Chinese people have made achievements in economic Construction which have attracted global attention. The economic plan laid down by the State in 1995, with its long-range objectives to be achieved by 2010, along with the "Resolution of the Central Committee on Important Issues in Strengthening Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization" together form a magnificent blueprint of socialist material civilization and building up of spiritual civilization which we can follow as we enter the next century. This blueprint is also closely connected with the development and prosperity of our country. We beseech our Lord above to bless this blueprint for the future, that it may be realized soon.

In the international arena of which we are a part, peace and development have become the main themes of our times. Building good relations between our country and our neighbors is an important element in the peaceful and stable development of Asia and the Pacific region. We are thankful for this, and also ask God to give us enduringly peaceful surroundings, so that people may live and work in peace and contentment, with God's church continuing to thrive with each passing day.

The vast majority of Christians possess both a sincere patriotic zeal and also a clear conscience. Along with all our nation's people, we have contributed toward the policies of openness and reform and the building of socialism us we ought. In the years 1992 to 1994 alone, around 20,000 Christians were selected as national, provincial or city level "model workers" and "advanced producers". The political and social status of Christians is constantly rising, and there are Christian representatives and members at every level of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) now. Eleven members of the current Joint Standing Committee have been elected as representatives to the NPC and as members of the CPPCC at the national levels.

The policy of freedom of religious belief as enshrined in the constitution continues to be implemented in all fullness. For several years now, Chairman Jiang Zemin and CPPCC Chairman Li Ruihuan have personally received religious representatives many times and heard their thoughts on the progress in implementing and carrying out religious policy, and both men have made several important speeches on issues of concern to religious circles. Chairman Jiang Zemin has made three statements on China's religious question: Firstly, the Party's religious policy should he implemented and carried out completely and correctly. Secondly, the work of managing religious affairs according to the law should be strengthened. Thirdly, religion and socialist society should be actively guided to adapt well to each other. Comrade Li Ruihuan has also pointed out that "in our country, every individual and every group, including every religion, should all the safeguard sanctity of the law, protecting the interests of the people, protecting the unity of the minority nationalities, and protecting the unity of the country. In our country, no individual or organization, including any religion, may in the least way contravene state laws, harm the people's interests, create divisions among the minority nationalities or do harm to the unity of the state. This is the most basic code of conduct." Following on from the strengthening and building up of the country's legal system, the State Council promulgated the "Regulations Governing Religious Activities of Foreign Nationals in China" in 1994, as well as the "Regulations for the Management of Venues of Religious Activities" and the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council published "Procedures for the Registration of Venues of Religious Activities." These were passed with a view to guarantee normal religious activities, and protect the rights and interests of sites for religious activities in accordance with the law. We completely support all these and are engaged in their implementation.

Placing its hope in the compassion and grace of God, in the last five years, the Chinese church has grown again. The number of churches open nationwide has increased to over 12,0()(), in addition to around 25,000 meeting points, and the number of believers has reached around 10 million. We now have 17 seminaries, 12 of them newly built, extended or preparing to construct new school buildings in the past five years. Moreover, some provincial Christian Councils and Three-Self Committees are running or preparing to run Bible schools or training centers. From the 1980s on, the overall national figure for seminary graduates comes to a total of 2,700. There are currently close to 1,000 students in theological schools, with roughly equal numbers of men and women. In publications work, apart from the China Christian Council at the national level, Zhejiang, Jiangsu. etc., and eight other provincial Christian Councils and Three-Self Committees have printed materials. Nanjing, Yanjing, East China and Zhongnan seminaries each produce their own publications. In all these different ways, the needs of believers and church workers are being satisfied. In 1994, Qinghai Province set up its own Christian Council. We now have 27 Christian Councils and Three-Self Committees at the levels of province, autonomous regions, and municipalities (henceforth to be called simply provincial Christian Councils and Three-Self Committees) nationwide.

At the time of the last national Conference, 42 young coworkers were ordained to the ministry, and this provided the impetus for ordination everywhere. From 1992-95, 347 pastors and 272 teachers under the age of 45 were ordained at the province, autonomous region and municipality level, respectively making up 41.6 per cent of pastors and 63.4 per cent of teachers ordained during this period. According to 1995 statistics, the total number of young people on the teaching staffs at our seminaries was 81, or 61 per cent of those teaching specialized courses

in religious studies. In 23 provincial Christian Councils and Three-Self Committees we now see young co-workers taking on the positions of deputy Secretary-General, Secretary-General, etc. In order to reverse as soon as possible the serious phenomenon of the ageing of all levels of the leadership of our church, of the additional 26 committee members added to the China Christian Council in 1993 and 94, 20 are young people. What gives us particular cause for joy is that the average age of representatives at this conference is 52.6, 6.4 years younger than at the last conference. This all shows that there are successors within the Lord's family to carry on the work of the church.

At this solemn time, we especially remember those church workers who have gone to be with the Lord over the past five years. They are China Christian Council advisors Yan Jialei, Tang Shoulin, Wu Gaozi, Zeng Youshan, Deng Yuzhi, national Three-Self Vice-Chairman Liang Fuhuan, China Christian Council Vice-Presidents Cai Wenhao, Shen Yifan (concurrently General Secretary), Jiang Peifen, members of the Joint Standing Committee of the CCC, Su Hanjun, Zhuo Enxun, Guo Le, Wang Enbo, Chen Zhonghao, Zhu Jialin, Li Hufa, Bai Jingsheng, Sun Yanli, Kou Qingguang, Gao Yangzhong, Liu Bingzhong, Wang Dianchang, Chen Dawei, Li Yongwu. They worked with all their hearts and might throughout their lives for the development and the building up of the Chinese church. "And I heard a voice10 from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes.' says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them' " (Rev. 14:13).

Now I will briefly report on the work of the two national Christian organizations in the past five years and also raise a few tentative ideas and suggestions about future work.

Give Glory to God for the Five Years Past

As pointed out in the resolution of the Fifth National Christian Conference, the TSPM has already entered its new stage of running the church well according to the three-self principle. Furthermore, the principles of the TSPM need to be implemented more thoroughly to run the church well in every aspect of the its affairs and work. In order to carry forward the spirit of the above resolution over the past five years and in order to enable the Chinese church to better adapt to socialist society, the two national Christian organizations held two plenary committee meetings, six standing committee meetings and 12 meetings of their executive committees, one (enlarged) work meeting of middle-aged and young general secretaries, as well as forming ten committees on church administration, theological education, printing work, Bible printing, church music, rural work, overseas relations, editing of Tian *Feng*, minority nationality church work and women's work, etc. Because each of these committees has produced its own written report, I will simply cite here salient aspects of their service.

(1) Advancing the ministry of the church

1. Take theological education seriously and foster qualified personnel at all levels.

Cultivating more qualified personnel is the most pressing task currently facing the Chinese church. In order to strengthen and raise the overall level of Chinese theological education, the theological education committee has been putting a great deal of effort into

promoting the standardization of theological education and has provided assistance to every theological institution by providing them with the necessary facilities, enlarging their libraries, training teachers, etc. Through a concentrated process of testing and selection, 19 theological graduates were sent abroad for study between 1993 and 1996; six students have completed their studies and have returned.

Nanjing Union Theological Seminary now has 146 undergraduate and 15 postgraduate students. A trial academic degree system has been in place since 1995 and 4 M. Div. and 33 B. Th. degrees have been awarded. The seminary has also set up a three-year Bible correspondence course, enrolling 1,000 new students every year. Graduates of the course presently total 1,750 with 3,000 currently enrolled.

The two national Christian organizations have given solid support to theological schools and seminaries in the construction of buildings, supplying extra equipment and also in the process of drawing up plans with seven provincial CCs to provide short-term subsidies to theological graduates who face financial difficulties.

2. Develop rural work and stress lay training.

By far the greater number of believers in China live in the countryside, yet there is a great shortage of rural evangelists. Simply relying on theological schools and seminaries to train pastors is far from enough to satisfy the actual needs of churches in each area. The rural work committee, apart from printing the rural preaching series By *Streams of Water,* has also assisted some provinces in holding lay training classes for the rural church. In 1995 the committee also set up a lay training materials research sub-committee made up of co-workers responsible for rural work in 22 provinces, regions and municipalities to look into raising the standard of work in running the classes, resisting heresy etc. The sub-committee is preparing to print a series of books on lay training.

In 1996 the rural work committee also organized co-workers to go to Yunnan and Shanxi to assist in lay training work there, with good results.

3. Devote ourselves to publications and take seriously the varied needs of believers.

Publishing the Bible is the primary task in the church's publications work. With enormous support from the Amity Printing Company, the yearly Bible printing and distribution capacity has increased by a large margin: 1994: 2,2000,000 copies; 1995: 2,500,000 copies; 1996: 3,300,000 copies. In the past five years a total of ten million copies have been printed and distributed. The variety of formats of the Bibles printed has also continued to grow, including among them a Chinese/English bilingual Bible, Bibles in minority scripts, Braille Bibles, etc. In order to open up and broaden Bible distribution channels, the Bible printing committee has set up 45 Bible distribution points across the country. Importance is also placed on supplying believers and meeting points who have little contact with the CCC. To aid believers in their study of the Bible, the China Christian Council has published a simplified character edition of the *Concordance of the Old and New Testaments,* the *Annotate d*in each area. The rural work committee, apart from printing the rural preaching series By Streams of Water, has also assisted

some provinces in holding lay training classes for the rural church. In 1995 the committee also set up a lay training materials research sub-committee made up of co-workers responsible for rural work in 22 provinces, regions and municipalities to look into raising the standard of work in running the classes, resisting heresy etc. The sub-committee is preparing to print a series of books on lay training.

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Use of the Hymnal (New Edition) continues to grow, with more than 8,000,000 copies distributed since 1983. In order to help local churches raise their level of understanding of worship and hymns, the CCC has published *Order and Liturgy for Worship Gatherings* and *Notes on Composers and Hymns in the Hymnal (New Edition).* In order to satisfy the needs of rural churches and meeting points, the church music committee in 1995 published *Choruses and Anthems.* Of the 640 items included, 300 are based on Bible passages and 352 are original works by Chinese Christians.

From 1992 to October 1996, through the agency of the Christian literature and publications committee, the CCC published 35 new titles, for a total of 2,830,000 copies in distribution. These include devotional titles such as *Meditations on Jesus* by Chen Chonggui, the first volume of collected writings of Bishop Shen Yifan *Service in the Pulpit,* Huang Guangxiao's *Green Pastures,* etc. Translations of foreign works include the complete *Streams in the Desert;* works by overseas Chinese include *Selected Biblical Research of Kou Shiyuan (vols. I* and II; Taiwan) and Rev. Li Zhigang's *Abundant Life (HK).*

In order to strengthen publications work, the CCC set up the Ai Ji Printing Works in Shanghai. Since starting operations in 1995, it has printed around two million copies of the church magazine, *Tian Feng,* and other publications. In addition, audio tapes of the Bible have

been made in a recording studio set up by ourselves, including the complete New Testament and selected readings from the Psalms. In the past five years we have distributed nearly one million of the various cassettes produced.

The monthly *Tian Feng*, the mouthpiece of the CCC, is devoted to providing spiritual support, reports of church news and discussions of questions of concern to believers. In 1996 subscriptions were above 120,000. In *1993 Tian Feng* was submitted to a National Publications Achievements Fair as a Christian publication and in 1995 it was also entered in the International Book Fair in Frankfurt, Germany.

The Nanjing Union Theological Seminary has published 12 new books in the past five years and distributed over *390,000* copies of these. Fourteen issues of the *Nanjing Theological Review* have appeared in the last five years and an overseas edition in traditional characters is also published. The journal has worked hard to promote the Chinese church's own theological thinking.

4. Urge the formulation of rules and regulations for local churches.

The previous standing committee of the CCC passed the "Church Order for Trial Use in Chinese Churches" (hereafter "Trial Order"). Through extensive propaganda by the church administration all provincial CCs have now more or less worked out their own church orders and have encouraged city- and county-level CCs and grassroots churches to formulate their own regulations, so that churches have basic rules to follow in conducting their own affairs. This also aids religious groups and venues for religious activities in meeting the requirements for registration.

Local churches have reflected the need for revisions in the "Trial Order". After conducting visits and surveys, the church administration committee drafted the present "Chinese Christian Church Order", which has been discussed and adopted by this Twelfth Standing Committee of the CCC.

5. Promote women's work and work with national minority groups.

In 1993 it was suggested that a committee on women's work be set up to highlight the role of women, who make up over 70 per cent of believers in China. Women should be helped to develop their potential and encouraged to take part in church decision-making processes, thus better serving church and society. Through the impetus of this committee, 14 provincial CCs have organized their own committees on women's work. Since 1995, women across the nation have held World Day of Prayer services on the first Friday in March. In August 1995 the women's work committee and the YWCA participated jointly in the NGO Forum convened concurrently with Fourth UN Women's Conference. They held a symposium titled "Women-Christianity-Society" which was well-received by women from around the world and received a commendation from the Chinese organization committee of the NGO forum.

Among the 55 national minority groups in China, the greatest number of Christians is to be found among the Korean, Miao, Yi, Jingpo, Lisa, Wa, Hani, and Lahu. In 1993 the committee

on minority church work was formed with purpose of strengthening contacts and sharing on church affairs among Christians of different minority nationalities. The CCC have assisted in the printing of Bibles and hymnals in ethnic languages, by organizing visits to minority nationality Christians, and by subsidizing the building of lay training centers for minority nationality churches. They are also editing a picture book on minority nationality churches.

6. Extend overseas contacts.

The overseas relations committee has developed its work in line with the policy of different treatment for different groups. On the basis of mutual respect, equality and friendship, it has developed and deepened links with overseas churches and believers, while at the same time resolutely resisting the instigation of rumors, slander and infiltration activities of reactionary overseas religious forces who disregard our three-self principle. In the past five years we have received a total of 203 visiting delegations and sent out 108 delegations ourselves.

We continue to develop links with overseas churches. We have received the British Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and former Archbishop Runcie, the Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches, Konrad Raiser, the famous evangelical theologian John Stott, the General Secretary of' the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A., Joan Campbell, and representatives from international organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. We also attach importance to developing contacts with churches in neighboring countries. and have formed links with churches in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, as well as sending visiting delegations to churches in the broader Asian region, including Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, etc. With the impending return of Hong Kong in 1997, our contacts with churches there have increased. We have also strengthened relations with Chinese churches in the US, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, and have invited people with whom we are on friendly terms to the mainland to preach or lecture.
As a member of the World Council of Churches, we have the option of taking part in the international meetings held by that body, and deepening ties with churches around the world. We are also enthusiastically developing exchanges between our country and theological schools and seminaries from all over the world and pay attention to making friends with young Christians overseas.

Developing Patriotism and Three-Self Education: Leading Christians to Love Country and Love Church

In order to implement a "Program for Carrying Out Patriotic Education," the fourth meeting of the current standing committee passed a "Resolution on the Development of Patriotic Education," calling on CCs and theological institutions to develop patriotic education and a three-self education which incorporates the current state of Christianity. The TSPM published *Selected Writings from the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China* in 1993, which was followed recently by another title, *On Three-Self and the Building Up of the Church,* a selection of writings and papers presented by Bishop K.H. Ting at meetings of the CCC between 1980 and 1995. In 1995, the CCC organized two discussion groups for young and middle-aged co-workers below the age of fifty on the theme "Patriotism and Three-Self in Connection with Building Up the Church". Through sharing in these groups, co-workers

taking part strengthened their sense of national confidence and also ,advanced in understanding of the importance of Three-Self and building up the church.

In order to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the victory over fascism in the World War and victory in the Chinese war of resistance to Japan, Bishop K.H. Ting and various other representatives from the CCC took part in August 1995 in a symposium for religious circles convened by the CPPCC. The CCC responded to the proposal of the Peace Committee for Religious Circles in China by calling on churches all over the country to hold a week of prayer for peace. They also passed a resolution designating the month of August as a time for the church nationwide to pray for world peace. To commemorate contributions made in 1945 by patriotic Christians to the national salvation movement and resisting military aggression, we published a book entitled *In the Cause of Justice and Peace.*

In 1993 the CCC held activities to remember the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the main founders of the TSPM, Mr. Y.T. Wu. In line with these activities a book On *the Life and Work of Y.T. Wu* was also published. In 1995 the CCC held a meeting to commemorate the forty-fifth anniversary of the Three-Self Movement. The co-workers who participated shared their own experiences as illustrations of the rightness, reasonableness and necessity of the Three-Self Movement.

Apart from taking part in relief work in stricken areas, and contributing money toward the Foundation for the Handicapped, the CCC have also requested provincial CCs to promptly convene meetings for the exchange of experiences on contributions to building the two civilizations, material and spiritual, of socialism, in order to set a good example of loving one's country and loving one's church among believers.

For several years now, all kinds of heresy have assaulted the foundations of the church. The CCC have exposed and criticized this in *Tian Feng* and in all kinds of meetings, and have published a book *Cling to Truth and Resist Heresy,* helping co-workers and fellow Christians to improve their awareness of Ibis issue.

Improve Contacts with Provincial Christian Councils and Listen to the Views of Co-Workers and Fellow Believers

In the last five years there have been visits by representatives from the CCC to Henan, Guangdong, Anhui, Shanxi, Hubei, Yunnan, Guizhou, Liaoning, Jilin, Jiangxi, Tianjin and Hebei provincial CCs and churches, and ideas have been exchanged on the problems CCs in each area face in strengthening themselves, in the division of property within provinces and cities, in the implementation of religious policy and so on.

Correspondence work is an important channel of communication between the CCC and co-workers and believers in local areas. In the past five years we have received over 4,500 letters from around the nation, and have had over 250 visits from believers seeking assistance with some difficulty. All kinds of problems are reflected, including the implementation of religious policy, internal church disputes, harassment due to the influence of heresy, infiltration by overseas anti-China forces, etc. In the vast majority of cases, our church replies promptly and

reflects each case to the relevant authorities. Sometimes we receive feedback on how some of these cases are being handled.

In order to facilitate the spread of information, the CCC publish an occasional periodical *Church News*, which is distributed to committee members, provincial CCs and theological institutions. Twenty-three issues have been printed in the past five years.

Assisting the Government in the Implementation of the Policy of Religious Freedom and Carrying Out the Registration of Churches and Meeting Points Well

Before announcing the "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities" and "Registration Procedures for Venues of Religious Activities," the State Council and the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) solicited the opinions of representatives of the CCC many times. The CCC have been very concerned about this important issue which affects the religious life of the masses, and during the consultation process continuously raised ideas and suggestions which were treated very seriously by the RAB. In order to facilitate understanding of the requirements and content of the registration process, and to clear up unnecessary misgivings believers around the country might have, Tian Feng has undertaken to publicize and introduce the measures involved. This has enabled smooth progress in the registration of churches and meeting points in the vast majority of places. As to some problems which have appeared at the grassroots and which are not in keeping with policy regulations, we have followed the method of "reflecting specialized topics" and promptly raised these with the RAB, requesting that these problems be looked into and put right.

In these few years local government has continued to try its best to solve remaining problems concerning religious property, but the situation is still uneven. The CCC support representatives from local CCs in going through the channels of the NPC and the CPPCC, etc., or following legal procedures in order to protect the rights and interests of the church according to the law.

The CCC can report cases of violations of the policy of the freedom of religion to the RAB and can also link up with local and provincial CCs to seek a solution to the problem among themselves. Some newspapers have published articles which have blurred the line dividing Christianity from superstition, offending believers' religious feelings. Our church sent a critique by letter which has resulted in a correction and an apology.

All of the work of the CCC described above is carried out with the direct cooperation of provincial CCs and with the enthusiastic support of the vast majority of co-workers and believers. Many overseas church groups and individuals who respect the sovereignty of the Chinese church have also given a lot of help. For all of this, on behalf of the CCC, I would like to express our deepest and sincerest thanks.

In the past five years we have accomplished something, so let us give glory to God's name for everything that has been achieved. We can only stand before God and say "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done" (Luke 17:10). There are still many weaknesses and deficits spread Out before us. In the area of serving all Christians

throughout the country, in the area of the number and variety of Bibles and all kinds of other publications, we still cannot completely satisfy all our believers' needs. The contact between the CCC and provincial CCs is still not strong enough. A particular weakness is that, faced with the many problems which have arisen in the new situation in which Chinese Christianity finds itself, the CCC lacks a comprehensive investigation and study of how to run the church well. Though we hear many appeals that this be done, there are few deep or guiding ideas put forward. At present, while pushing forward with three-self and running the church well in some places, things have got out of line, with some grassroots churches going their own way, while others have internal disputes. There are many reasons for all this, and the lack of a strong guiding thought on the part of the CCC is also a factor. We can only pray for God's compassion and hope to take advantage of this Conference to earnestly improve under the supervision and urging of the delegates.

Make Clear our Direction and Run the Church Well

Summarizing the experience of the past five years, the most profound thing that we have learned is that we absolutely must live up to the deepest expectations of our Chinese Christians, that we need to run the Lord's church well throughout the land. The Chinese church needs the catholicity of the ecumenical church, looking upon Christ as its head and with believers as the limbs, abiding by biblical teaching to build a spiritual house. At the same time the church needs to have its own special character - and this is exactly what is meant by running the church well according to the three-self principle.

Since the TSPM was launched in the 1950s it has yielded huge results. Living in the 90s of today, why do we still want to stress the "three-self principle"? Simply because it still has relevance for the future direction of the Chinese church. Two thousand years of church history have shown us that whenever and wherever in history, Christianity has always faced the problem of adapting to the age and the surroundings. The launch of the Three-Self Movement was Chinese Christianity's way of adapting to new China. It expresses both the identification of Christianity with the Chinese people and its adaptation to the demands of the times, taking the initiative to make the necessary internal adjustments in the church. This is not merely a demand of the Chinese people, more, it is the church's own need for development. Only in this way can our church adapt to socialist society and look forward to broader prospects for the future. Looking at the international situation, some reactionary force are still using Christianity to carry out infiltration activities and vainly attempt to carry out plots to "westernize" and "divide China, or to foment political subversion and destruction. On the domestic font, attempts by those who would break the law by using Christianity to carry out illegal activities do occur. Moreover, in these past few years, because the direction an guiding policy of running the church well have not been thought out very carefully, some local churches have not had the strength to resist infiltration from outside and the interference of heresy. In some places, internal management is not good and social responsibility has been overlooked. The result is that believer thinking is muddled, and it has become difficult to develop the work and affairs of the church. From these examples we ca see that if we do not persist in the three-self principle there a real danger of losing our direction on the way toward building up the church.

Over these past five years co-workers and Christians nation-wide have continued to explore what it means to run the church well according to the three-self principle. We are all aware that the church belongs to heaven and that it must act according t biblical teaching in matter of faith - conscientiously spreading the Gospel, helping believers progress in their spiritual life making clear the line between right and wrong, and being a good witness. Yet the church is also rooted on earth - it is a social organization and politically it needs to match the pulse of the broad masses of the Chinese people, sharing a common fate an gaining their trust and understanding. Summarizing our experience once of building up the church in these past few years, an drawing on our common knowledge gained, we can point to the following as the main content of running the church we a according to the three-self principle:

(1) The need to persist in maintaining our independence and keeping the initiative in our own hands.

In 1950 the task of the TSPM was to fight for the church's independence and self-determination by cutting all ties with imperialism, casting off the foreign mission board control of the Chinese church, and to realize the self-government, self-support and self-propagation of the Chinese church. At the present time, the task of Chinese Christians, who now enjoy independence and self-determination, is to protect and consolidate those successes which have already been achieved.

In light of hostile activities and attempts to infiltrate our churches on the part of anti-China forces from overseas, in 1980, Bishop K.H. Ting announced to the world on behalf of Chinese Christianity: "Church work and evangelism within China is the sovereign right and responsibility of the Chinese church alone. Regardless of their origin, all foreigners without exception must refrain from activities of an evangelical nature within China unless they have obtained the prior agreement of the Chinese church authorities." Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, promulgated in 1982, expressly states: "Our country's religious groups and religious affairs must not be under the control of any foreign forces." In 1994 the State Council issued Order 144, namely, "Regulation Governing the Religious Activities of Foreign Nationals within the People's Republic of China". Both these provisions were declared by the State, using the constitution and laws to protect our nation's sovereign rights in matters of religion and to reflect our will and desires.

We stress independence and self-determination, but this does not at all imply self-isolation. With churches in every part the world, we belong to the same body with Christ as its he and ourselves as its limbs. The experience of history tells us the Chinese church can only become a witnessing branch of the church universal when it persists in independence and self-c termination. Only with this as a prerequisite can it engage ecumenical sharing with the other limbs of the body. V resolutely oppose those people who, under the guise of spreading the Gospel, attempt to split the Chinese church and bring it under their control, who even go so far as to attack the socialist system our people have chosen, fomenting plots to split the country issues such as Taiwan and Tibet, etc.

It is worth noting that, in recent years, some Christian groups and individuals outside our borders have shown a blatant disregard for the sovereignty of our church. They have take

advantage of the opportunity afforded by the China's opening and reform, and have attempted to infiltrate us through all kin of means. Sometimes money is the bait, sometimes they advance their agenda by starting enterprises or providing funds to soc development projects. Or they appear as scholars or experts secretly building power bases for themselves and extending the networks all over China. For example, individual foreign Christian groups have attached all sorts of conditions to donation they have presented to our seminaries, vainly attempting change the direction of China's Christian independence, self-d termination and running the church by ourselves. Thus we c see that the independence and self-determination which we ha achieved through the TSPM is still under threat today. On the other hand, assaulted by the worship of money prevalent today, the is a tendency among some co-workers to forfeit their vigilance and their principles. We must not take this lightly. "Refusing handouts" and "refusal to humble oneself for five measures of rice" are fine Chinese traditions with thousands of years of history behind them. Every Chinese Christian should uphold the spirit of independence and self-determination and develop a sense of national self-respect, self confidence and strength.

(2) The need for patriotic education.

In the old society, Christianity was used by the imperialist system to carry out cultural aggression, and Christians' thinking was poisoned by this to varying degrees. People said that Christianity was a foreign religion, and the saying went "One more Christian means one less Chinese." One of the huge successes of the TSPM has been to make Chinese Christians into patriotic Christians. "Love your country, love your church, glorify God and benefit the people" has now become the proper meaning of Christian faith and action and this has changed the image of Chinese Christianity. Nowadays, Chinese Christians, like all people in China, believe that only socialism can make China prosperous and strong. The Chinese Communist Party which leads China's socialist construction is atheist, but our country is also a country of freedom of religious belief. We fully agree with the requirement the Communist Party makes of religious circles: "In politics, unite and co-operate: in faith, have mutual respect", as well as Chairman Jiang Zernin's point that we should "Love your country, love your church, unite and progress."

In recent years attempts at infiltration by hostile forces from overseas have placed great emphasis on the contradiction between "belief and non-belief' and "belief in God versus atheism", in a vain bid to incite Chinese Christians fooled by them to oppose the Chinese Communist Party and socialism. Some anti-China extremists openly claim that they want to carry out "underground evangelism" in China. They shout things like "There's no avoiding conflict between those who believe in God and those who do not", and curse the Communist Party and the people's government in the most malicious language, saying they want to change our country's socialist system, and so on and so on. We should be on guard against this to the highest degree.

Patriotism is a banner to mobilize and inspire the Chinese people to unite and struggle together. It is a mighty force carrying Chinese society forward in history. Christianity has all along possessed a tradition of serving society. We should break through the narrow idea of caring only for ourselves and should take the state, society and the masses to our hearts, striving to make even greater contributions to the building of socialist modernization. The recently published "Resolution of the Central Committee on Important Issues in Strengthening

Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization" stresses that "all moral thinking that is beneficial to national unity, ethnic unity, economic development and social progress should be encouraged." Christianity is a religion which preaches ethics. We have much to offer in the formation of thought and morality. We must develop Christian morality among our believers so as to let the "light from our golden lampstand shine brightly for all to see." At the same time, we want to encourage believers to throw themselves into the mass movement of building spiritual civilization, so as to raise the level of all citizens in such areas as scientific education and the concept of a democratic legal system.

(3) The need to work hard to increase unity.

In the old society, because foreign mission boards were in control, a great number of denominations also sprang up in the Chinese church and these would attack each other. Also, because of divisive activities on the part of imperialists, contradictions between Christians and adherents of other religions were aggravated. From its beginning, the TSPM upheld the principle of mutual respect in matters of faith. Under the major premise of' resisting imperialism and patriotism while carrying out three-self, the TSPM has strengthened unity between each denomination, and has gained quite substantial results in this area. In today's "post-denominational era", we need all the more to live according to the Bible's teachings and God's guidance for the Chinese church. "Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives" (Eph.4:3). Either because denominationalism has reared its head once again or for other reasons, churches in some places have begun bickering and attacking those whose views do not accord with their own, and the majority of believers have been deeply grieved by this. "Let the love of' the Christian community show itself in mutual affection. Esteem others more highly than yourself' (Rom. 12:10). Christians who adhere to differing tenets of faith should not break with each other, damaging the body of Christ.

For a whole host of reasons, there are also some Christians or meeting points which have sprung up on their own and which have little or no contact with any level of the CCC. Among them many are patriotic and law-abiding, approving of the three-self principle, adhering to a pure faith. We are open to strengthening our contacts with them, so that brothers and sisters in the Lord may deal with each other equally, share each other's burdens, offer each other all possible support, clear up misunderstandings, and walk together along the road of loving one's country and loving one's church.

Under the guidance of the policy of religious freedom and in pursuit of unity, the TSPM also supports the appropriate handling of relations among religious believers, those who profess other religions, and those who profess no religion. The freedom citizens enjoy should never be used to violate the freedoms of others. As good witnesses to the Gospel, as well as to safeguard social stability, we need to emphasize goodwill towards all our compatriots so that we treat each other with loving hearts, respect each other in matters of faith, and peacefully co-exist. We should not exaggerate the differences between belief and non-belief in everyday life. Only in this way can unity between the believing and the unbelieving masses be strengthened as we try our best to build the socialist two civilizations together.

(4) The need to vigorously carry out the "three wells."

The three-self principle and running the church well arc inseparable. The "three wells", namely that "self-administration means administering well, self-support means that our church i well-supported and self-propagation means we are a church it which propagation is done very well," indicate the continuing development and deepening of three-self in the cause of running the church well. Departure from the "three wells" may cause the three-self principle to become an empty slogan. Only if the three-self principle is closely linked with actual church work cat the church bear the fruit of healthy development.

Problems in self-administration are rather prominent a present, with internal church disputes in some places reaching such serious proportions that they disgrace the Lord's name an(affect social stability. CCs at every level, grass roots churches and the majority of believers must shoulder the responsibility for administering the church well, conscientiously drafting an(strictly implementing a system of church order, so as to transform the poor work style within churches whereby decisions tend to be made arbitrarily. The church is made up of the multitude of saints, it is not the private property of those in charge of an individual church. We cannot have a situation where what only one person says goes. When matters arise, we need to put democracy into full practice, confer together to seek God's will and reach a decision through consultation. Nor does democracy mean that any believer can require the church to take some action at the behest of the individual concerned. We need to exercise authority through administrative organs in order to have both democracy and the necessary centralization.

Under present conditions, there is no substitute for the role of the CCC in assisting in and coordinating the work of grassroots churches. CCs on every level must firmly instill the idea of service to the grassroots churches, meeting problems with full consultation and assisting in the solution of concrete problems. Once a solution has been formulated in consultation with the CC, the grassroots churches should cooperate in carrying it out. If different opinions emerge, they should be discussed among the original participants, or referred to the next higher level of the two bodies, those involved should not just go their own way. At the request of local committee members, the Standing Committee of the CCC has revised the "Trial Order" and hopes this will serve to strengthen guidance and supervision in church affairs.

Self-support currently faces new challenges. Our Chinese church is still not well-off financially. Therefore in the course of its building up, it needs to practice hard work and thriftiness and live according to its means. If we look overseas for support, then we will become like beggars and in the end this will cause the Chinese church to lose its dignity and all that Chinese believers have built up over the past forty and more ye, namely, the fine spirit of the church itself loyally seeing to own affairs. If we came to the point of once again being controlled by overseas forces, then this would lead to no end trouble in the future.

Chinese Christians are cheerful givers. Maintaining c foundation of struggle and self-reliance, we need to turn a gaze inward. We hope churches in quite prosperous areas will organize themselves to help out churches in poverty-stricken areas and thereby carry forward the spirit of "the limbs of body" watching out for each other.

The importance of self-propagation is increasingly recognized by churches all across the country, especially in the are of spreading the pure gospel message, deepening understanding of the fundamentals of the faith and opposing heresy. We s need to strengthen the development of contextual theological reflection so that our manner of expressing the Gospel in accordance with Chinese culture. We need to rid ourselves of the extreme thinking which negates human worth and the world around religious fanaticism and harmful ideas such as simply waiting for the world to end. Among the messages currently being preached from the pulpits of local churches you can sometimes still find a word-for-word aping of certain nineteenth-century Western missionary views denigrating Chinese culture. So messages are taken from overseas religious publications, content of which is not applicable to our present conditions, which is simply out of step with our actual daily life or even contrary to our guiding principle of loving the country and loving the church. If we fail to stress improvement in this situation there will be harmful social results. Adaptation between Christianity and socialist society depends to a large extent our ability in the pulpit and in our publications to satisfy believers' spiritual needs and give correct guidance through theological thinking.

The four "needs" described above place new demands on co-workers and Christians throughout the country and especially upon CCs and those in positions of responsibility in our churches.

One such demand is to raise the quality of faith, thought and education as quickly as possible. When the wind of heresy blows suddenly and violently, there are not a few fine believers, especially rural believers, who suffer harm because they lack the ability to discriminate - this is a bitter lesson to us all. In the course of building up the church, we should not look only at increasing numbers, we also need to help believers in a practical way to raise their understanding of the truth of the Bible. We also need to help them to develop the ability of discrimination and to raise their level of education. In this way the church's foundation will be built firmly on solid rock. Church leaders shoulder a great responsibility: to run the church well according to the three-self principle. The road we are following is both new and exciting - the main thing is to rely on God's guidance and also be sure that we constantly progress in knowledge and experience. We need to learn how to manage the church so as to deal wisely and sincerely with people.

A second demand is the need to re-dedicate ourselves before God. Running the church well according to the three-self principle is not something to be taken lightly. We face all kinds of trials and challenges. It will be difficult to run the church well if the Lord's servants and handmaidens do not have hearts of total dedication, humility and enduring patience, a willingness to take up their cross and a determination not to calculate individual fame and wealth. Some people in responsible positions in individual churches have left behind their original good intentions of total dedication and their selfish desires have expanded. The damage this has brought to the church is incalculable. This should all serve as a warning to us. Older and younger co-workers, all Christians, need a renewal of purpose in the Holy Spirit, once again resolving to devote everything to the Lord.

As We Look to the Future, We Bear a Heavy Responsibility.

Delegates, the current situation is extremely beneficial to the healthy development of our church. The crux of the matter lies in how we ourselves grasp the opportunity at hand, do our work well, and run our church as well as we possibly can. Unless we do, we cannot satisfy the will of our Father in heaven, nor the hopes and desires of the majority of our brothers and sisters. We have set a clear course for running the church well according to the three-self principle, but we must still resolve to expend all necessary energy to accomplish this - beginning from where we are, making the extra effort, and accomplishing more in concrete terms. To this end. I list some of the tasks involved:

(1) In order to run the church well, we need to strengthen the self-construction of Christian Councils and Three-Self Committees at all levels and set up competent work groups.

The CCC and its counterpart every level bear an unshirkable and historic mission with regard to running the church well. They are the key groups in this self-construction and it is here that the process should begin. Members of groups within the CCC must have a basic attitude of upholding three-self, an ardent love of the church and a determination to run it well and serve it; they must ardently love the motherland, be patriotic and law-abiding; they must work selflessly for the public interest and look to the big picture rather than enhancing their personal power. They must have a democratic work style and excel in listening to all sides in order to unite co-workers - there is no place for a single voice to dominate, they must act according to regulations, and abide by financial transparency - public funds cannot be used for personal gain.

The CCC should set an example by our own self-construction. We should exert great effort in putting together a promising young work team and handle well the passing of leadership from young to old. Succeeding to leadership is not only a matter of taking over a group's duties, more importantly it means Succeeding to the elder generation's fine tradition of love for country and for church. The CCC must also strengthen links with its counterpart at the provincial level, assist them in building up their own groups, and take seriously the development of an active role for women and youth.

(2) To run the church well, we need to strengthen theological education and the development of
theological thinking.

Theological education and the building up of theological thought has a direct bearing on the training of personnel. Moreover, the training of personnel is not simply a concrete need for the present, it has even greater bearing on the future direction, path and quality of the Chinese church. In recent years, it has become increasingly clear to co-workers across the nation that the building of theological institutions does not necessarily correspond to the production of qualified personnel. More than this, we need to look at whether our guiding policy for an education that develops students "spiritually, morally, intellectually, physically and in community life" has been thoroughly implemented, whether the syllabus is in line with this guiding policy, and whether the teaching teams we are developing respond to our pedagogical needs. The CCC are willing to support and assist theological institutions, to appraise them from a standpoint of seeking truth from facts, and engage in sharing aimed at building on strengths and

improving weaknesses. We must guard against disregard of national educational needs, disregard of' our origins, disregard for the strength of our staff, and a tendency to blindly "improve" things, paying attention only to "getting on track" in international terms while "going off track" at home. Building up a qualified teaching staff is the key to a thorough and correct guiding policy in education, especially in the three areas of spiritual, moral and intellectual well-roundedness. Raising the professionalism of staff can be accomplished in various ways: inviting experts in, sending staff out for further study, advanced study in a specialization, academic exchanges, etc. From now on, we should send students abroad for study with clearer objectives for their training.

Co-workers are these days increasingly aware of the importance of building up theological thinking. The central issue is, on what kind of theological thinking shall we base our theological education? Our basic faith cannot be altered, but theological thinking can develop over time, because God's revelation is revealed gradually, and our understanding and knowledge of God's revelation develops gradually as well. Recently, Bishop Ting pointed out, "Many people come to worship now, the churches are quite crowded. This situation could easily lead us to complacency, to neglect of the basic building up of the church. Quite a few of our co-workers are busy with daily affairs and meetings, and so do not give much thought to long term goals of the church. How can theological thinking come alive, how can it be innovative and less predictable. This makes me think we are like the church in Laodicea. We think we are rich, we do not realize we are actually poor, blind and naked, that God can spit us out of His mouth at any time." These words of Bishop Ting are sincerely offered and may serve both to remind us and to spur us on. We need to engage in deep reflection and discussion on how to improve theological education in China.

(3) In order to run the church well, we must strengthen rural church work.

Currently by far the greater number of rural churches and meeting points are led by lay workers. Their enthusiastic spirit of dedication is commendable but because of their lack of systematic theological training, they sometimes find it hard to differentiate biblical truth from heresy. Therefore, training lay workers is an important priority for our work over the next several years. The rural work committee has drawn up an "Outline for Lay Training" (discussion document), and we hope that once the text is finalized, the CCC can work with provincial CCs and workable practical measures can be adopted on the basis of real local needs to speedily implement the document in a planned and orderly manner.

Taking the situation following registration of venues for religious activity into account, provincial CCs should give priority in training opportunities to those meeting points which have been granted only temporary registration because their lay leaders do not meet the stipulated criteria. Such training must be suited to the realities of work in the grassroots church. Lay leaders should be coached in biblical exegesis and theological viewpoint; their knowledge of the Bible, basic tenets of the faith and running the church well according to the three-self principle should be raised; their ability to spot heresy should be strengthened, as should their education in the law. Local CCs can also hold specialized training in areas necessary for carrying out the ministry of the church, such as basic knowledge of church music, finances, etc.

(4) To run the church well, we must strengthen publication work.

The CCC should continue working hard to guarantee the continued supply of Bibles and hymnals. Apart from this, we must make a great and directed effort to publish works of exegesis, theological reference books, teaching materials for lay training, devotional books, books expounding the three-self principle and guides to running the church well. We must increase the coverage and effectiveness of literature and publications work in the Chinese church and resist illegal publications. In addition to books, we need to continue improving periodicals such as *Tian Feng,* the *Nanjing Theological Review* and the *Correspondence Course.*

We urge provincial CCs and theological institutions with editing and publishing capability to produce books and periodicals for their own use. Production of Christian audio-visual materials will continue. When translating or reprinting overseas publications permission of the copyright holder must be sought; furthermore the opinion of the CCC should also be sought so that consultation can take place as to whether the materials' content meets the needs of Chinese Christians. We Must give great support to training translators for literature work among minority nationalities. We must strengthen publications in their languages so that ethnic Christians have religious literature available to them.

At the same time as doing publications work well, we need to open up distribution channels for our publications and pay attention to marketing so that books and publications get into the hands of those believers who need them.

(5) In order to run the church well, we must strengthen patriotic and three-self education, and encourage our church and believers to involve themselves in building socialism's two civilizations.

We must continue to implement the "Resolution on Developing Patriotic Education" adopted by the Standing Committee of the CCC in 1994, and exchange experiences on local implementation of this resolution, and with our efforts at education through all sorts of means, such as forums, discussions, visits etc. aimed at conveying the content of patriotism and the guiding policy of three-self, so that "A good Christian should be a good citizen," becomes a common reality for our believers.

Building socialist morality has "serve the people" at its core. Christians with their "glorify God and benefit the people" outlook on life naturally witness through many acts of service. We must abide by the truth of the cross and self-sacrifice, keeping firmly in mind the biblical teachings: "not to be served, but to serve" and "loving our brothers, we should also love the people as a whole." In the area of social morality, we should do more that the people find good. In the area of professional ethics, see one's own work as "heavenly work" entrusted by God and develop the spirit of the faithful servant. In the area of family virtues, we need to honor parents, raise children well, stress harmony in marriage and care for one's neighbor. We must also draw a clear line between creating wealth for society and serving Mammon, and be clear about the essential distinction between building one's country and venal love of the world.

We must continue, through meetings, symposiums and so on, to commend believers as advanced models and distill from their witness spiritual experience and theological concepts which can he made more widely known to guide more believers in the practice and living out of their faith.

Where material and personnel resources are available, the church also should run some social welfare programs such as clinics, old people's homes, kindergartens, etc., in support of public welfare. The CCC should hold exchanges on such specialized topics with its provincial counterpart in order to facilitate the promotion of such activities.

(6) In order to run the church well, we need to strengthen the drafting, promotion and implementation of the Church Order. The Church Order which was discussed and adopted by the Standing Committee of the CCC, will enable all our churches to adhere to a more nearly common set of procedures in their conduct of church affairs. This will take the Chinese church another step forward toward union and is of great and present significance. The CCC must work hard to publicize the Church Order and strengthen communication with its provincial counterparts in the work of the church.

Those CCs at all levels which have not yet drafted their own order should draw upon and incorporate the new Church Order in drafting their own as soon as possible. Those which have already done so should undertake to examine actual conditions, summarize experience and revise as necessary.

(7) In order to run the church well. we need to develop our research work. Over the past few years, our church has concentrated its energies on restoring all the various aspects of its work and has lacked a plan to develop research. This is not beneficial to the church's long-term development. We must be resolute in our determination to change this state of affairs. Taking the actual needs of the Chinese church as our starting point, we need to stress field investigation and research, analysis of the state of the church, including all sorts of issues in the realms of self-administration, self-support and self-propagation, and all kinds of difficulties within the work of the church, exploring paths toward solutions. At the same time we should pay close attention to the problems in the thorough implementation of the religious policy, the state of affairs in overseas churches and how this affects us.

In our research work, we should base ourselves upon the spiritual experience of the mass of Chinese believers, on the present reality of the Chinese church, and on the great and rich spirit of China's own cultural tradition, rather than accepting wholesale the results of Western research. Our research work should serve the aim of running the church well according to the three-self principle.

(8) In order to run the church well, we must strengthen our capability for self-support.

The wealth of the church under self-support depends upon the wealth of its believers and this is in turn entirely dependent upon the prosperity of the nation. Today, the nation has taken off economically, and therefore the issue of self-support for the Chinese church can gradually be settled as it follows the nation. Our fundamental reliance is upon God, on

the biblical promise that "the Lord will provide", that God will surely provide the necessary funds for his holy work and for his servants' basic living needs. All that is needed is for CCs everywhere to work hard to run the church well, to speak more of the message entrusted to them, and believers who love the church will certainly give happily.

As to the special needs of churches in poor areas, the CCC must encourage churches in fairly well-off areas to carry out sharing in the lord, and support those provincial CCs who have the wherewithal in establishing funds in response to such needs. These provincial bodies should also provide necessary aid in line with their ability to give to theological graduates and clergy who have difficulties in making ends meet.

Implementation of the church's policy on property is one way of solving the issue of self-support. Some CCs at the Provincial and municipal levels have not yet divided property among themselves rationally and in the spirit of the Fuyang meeting on this question. The CCC should coordinate solutions case by case with the departments concerned.

All levels of the CCC and all churches would like to see a strict system of finances instituted which would put an end to corruption and waste and manage and use our limited funds well, as well as strengthen oversight of financial matters.

(9) In order to run the church well, we must protect the lawful rights and interests of the church, and assist the government in carrying out religious policy.

Concerning violations of religious policy, as well as problems which exist in the implementation of the policy on religious property and the registration of venues of religious activity, the CCC and its counterparts at all levels must adopt a positive attitude, and be unremitting in expediting and assisting relevant departments in solving problems one by one.

Some long-standing problems with church property elusive of solution can be appealed to the law. In the process, regard must be given to the overall state of social stability. We must continue to look into and reflect all the various problems which have appeared in the process of registration of churches and meeting points. We must continue in our efforts to persuade meeting points which are temporarily unwilling to register. As to those meeting points which do not yet meet all qualifications, and have therefore been granted temporary registration or whose registration has been deferred, local CCs should aid them in establishing some of the criteria well.

In order to do the work outlined above well, all co-workers responsible must conscientiously study the spirit of the relevant statutes, laws and policy, and guide believers to abide by the law and be conscious of their responsibilities to the state and to society.

(10) In order to run the church well, we must strengthen exchanges and sharing with churches all over the world. The Chinese government will resume sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macau in 1997 and 1999 respectively. We hail this and want to promote mutual understanding with the churches in these two places as well as strengthen contact and exchanges based on the principle of "mutual non-subordination, mutual non-interference, mutual respect."

Our feelings for believers and churches in Taiwan are those of compatriots and brothers and sisters and we eagerly await the establishment of further ties between us. Splitting the motherland, advocating Taiwan independence, or pursuing a Two Chinas or One China One Taiwan policy goes against the basic will of people and Christians on both sides of the straits. We hope some churches in Taiwan will place the greater good of their own people first and thus will not pursue such political activities, so as to avoid obstructing regular contact between Christians across the straits.

We will further develop friendly ties with ecumenical church groups and churches overseas, including overseas Chinese churches. We also welcome churches beyond our borders to join with us in our holy work. The content of such cooperation must be based on the needs of our church, the operating procedures must he legal and open and it must truly embody a relationship of partnership and equality in the Lord. We should raise our vigilance to combat the destructive forces of overseas anti-China forces who use money as bait and try to destroy their enemies one by one in a vain attempt to build up their own power bases. The CCC, its provincial counterpart, and all theological institutions must strengthen exchange of information on these groups. We ask that provincial CCs and theological institutions handle carefully any matters involving overseas donations, and promptly contact and consult with the CCC in these cases.

Delegates, I submit these suggestions for your consideration. I hope that the next committee will discuss your views on them and use the results as the basis for a plan of action.

Delegates, this conference takes place at an important moment in history. The decisions of this conference will have an effect on how our church enters the twenty-first century. The direction is already clear, the guiding policy set, the way clear before us. We look ahead with confidence. Regardless of the all the difficulties we still face, relying on the omnipotent power of the resurrected Lord, and the prayers of brothers and sisters all over the country for the building up of the body of Christ and their united efforts, we will win through and stride into the future.

We together look to Jesus in whom our faith begins and finds completion. We deeply believe that the Lord who never failed to bless us in years past, will in years to come continue to make manifest his abundant grace and mercy even more. We Chinese Christians *who bear a heavy burden will certainly he* able to re-create a glorious tomorrow for the Chinese church so that "the splendor of this latter house will surpass the *splendor of* the former" (Haggai 2:9), and the growth of the Chinese church match the great construction of the motherland. Let us with one heart and united effort accomplish the tasks described above, so that we take further practical steps toward running the Chinese church well, and stride into the great twenty-first century.

Dr. Wenzao Han is President of the China Christian Council, elected at the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference. Beijing, Dec. 1996-Jan. 1997.
Translated by Ian Groves.

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

Article 1 This Committee shall be known as the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (TSPM).

Article 11 The TSPM serves as the patriotic and church-loving organization of Chinese Christians. Its aim is to lead Christians to love the nation and the church, to safeguard the independence of the church, to strengthen unity within the church, and to serve the aim of making the Chinese church well run.

Article III The duties of the TSPM are as follows: Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government, to unite all Chinese Christians, to deeply love our socialist homeland, to abide by the national constitution and the laws, regulations and policies of the land, to uphold self-government, self-support and self-propagation as the guiding principles for a sovereign and autonomous church, and to defend and develop the achievements of the TSPM, to assist the government in implementing the policy of freedom of religious belief and in safeguarding the legitimate rights of the church, and to do its part in safeguarding national unity and stability, building socialist spiritual and material civilization, achieving national unification and developing friendly international relationships for the maintenance of world peace.

Article IV The National Chinese Christian Conference is the highest body of this Committee. Its duties are: Consideration of the Work Report of the outgoing Committee, discussion and determination of the guiding policies for the work of the incumbent Committee, the drafting or revision of this constitution and the election of the present Committee. The National Chinese Christian Conference is jointly convened by the present Committee of the TSPM and that of the China Christian Council. It shall meet every five years but when need arises, it may be convened earlier or later. The number of delegates and the method of selection shall be decided by joint deliberation of the Committees of the TSPM and CCC.

Article V The relationship between the TSPM and the China Christian Council is one of cooperation with differentiation of function, which involves joining with the CCC in convening the National Conference at prescribed intervals, and convening other joint meetings as the need arises.

Article VI The TSPM serves to strengthen contacts with all provincial (autonomous region, municipality) level Three-Self Committee, through setting up channels of communication, the exchange of experiences, study of and consultation on problems widespread among its counterparts at the provincial (autonomous region, municipality) level. It is the responsibility of Three-Self Committee at the provincial (autonomous region, municipality) level to observe and carry out the resolutions of the TSPM.

Article VII This committee shall be elected by the National Chinese Christian Conference, and its members shall serve until the following meeting of that Conference, with re-election leading to a further period of service. The duties of this committee are: To consider the Work Report of the Standing Committee; to discuss and urge the implementation of the guiding policies for work drawn up by the National Conference; to elect the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary-General and members of the Standing Committee; when necessary, names may be proposed for co-option or withdrawal, or an honorary Chairperson may be elected, to serve until the following National Christian Conference. The plenary of the National Conference shall be convened jointly by the Standing Committees of the TSPM and CCC every two years, or earlier or later when necessary.

Article VIII The Standing Committee of the TSPM shall consist of the Chairperson, Deputy-Chairpersons, Secretary-General and members of the Standing Committee whose period of service shall run until the next National Christian Conferencel. It shall deal with committee business when the plenary is not in session. When necessary, names may be proposed for co-option or withdrawal, and consultants may be invited. These shall serve until the following National Conference.

The Chairperson shall, with the assistance of the Deputy Chairpersons and Secretary-General, direct the work of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee of the TSPM shall be convened by the Executive Committee and shall meet every two years, but may be convened earlier or later when necessary.

Article IX The Associate Secretaries-General of the TSPM shall be nominated by the Secretary-General, subject to approval by the Standing Committee.

Article X The Standing Committee, together with the Standing Committee of the CCC, shall, when its work requires, appoint working groups or other specialized committees, which shall work under the joint direction of the Secretary-General of the TSPM and the General Secretary of the CCC. These specialized committees shall serve during the term of the Standing Committees which appoint them.

Article XI The Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons and Secretary-General shall comprise the Executive Committee to deal with the important daily business of the Standing Committee. It shall meet every six months. When necessary, the TSPM Executive Committee shall meet jointly with its counterpart in the CCC.

Article XII Funds for the TSPM shall be raised by the Standing Committee.

Article XIII The TSPM shall be based in Shanghai.

Article XIV The TSPM may not be dissolved except by decision of the National Chinese Christian Conference.

Article XV The authority to interpret this constitution lies with the incumbent Standing Committee.

Article XVI This constitution takes effect upon approval by the National Chinese Christian Conference and may be subject to revision by that Conference.

Passed 2 January 1997.

The Chinese text governs.

The Constitution of the China Christian Council

Article I This Council shall be known as the China Christian Council (CCC).

Article II The CCC serves as the organization which deals with the affairs of the Chinese church on a national level. Its aim is to unite all Chinese Christians who believe in the Heavenly Father and who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and to run the church well under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with one heart and unity of purpose, in obedience to the truth of Scripture, the three-self patriotic principle, the Church Order of the Chinese church and the national constitution, laws, regulations and policies.

Article III 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, and offers its services to the churches in the performance of their ministry. It 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 the members.

Article IV The CCC promotes theological education and personnel training, the publication of the Bible, hymnbooks and other literature for the Chinese church, the exchange of experience in the areas of evangelism, pastoral work and administration among local churches, and promotes the formulation and perfection of church orders for local churches and the development of friendly relations with churches overseas.

Article V The National Chinese Christian Conference is the highest body of this Council. Its duties are: Consideration of the Work Report of the Outgoing Committee, discussion and determination of the guiding policies for the work of the incumbent Committee, the drafting or revision of this Constitution and the election of the present Committee. The National Chinese Christian Conference is jointly convened by the present Committee of the CCC and that of the TSPM. It shall meet every five years, but when need arises it may be convened earlier or later. The number of delegates and the method of selection shall be decided by joint deliberation of the Committees of the CCC and TSPM.

Article VI The relationship between this Council and the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China is one of cooperation with differentiation of function, which involves joining with that the TSPM in convening the National Conference at prescribed intervals, and convening other joint meetings as the need arises.

Article VII The CCC serves to strengthen contacts with all provincial (autonomous region, municipality) level Christian Councils (or Church Affairs Committees), through

setting up channels of communication, the exchange of experiences, study of and consultation on problems widespread among provincial (autonomous region, municipality) Christian Councils (or Church Affairs Committees). It is the responsibility of provincial (autonomous region, municipality) Christian Councils (or Church Affairs Committees) to observe and carry out the resolutions of the CCC.

Article VIII The CCC shall be elected by the National Chinese Christian Conference, and its members shall serve until the following meeting of that Conference, with re-election leading to a further period of service.

The duties of this committee are: To consider the Work Report of the Standing Committee; to discuss and urge the implementation of the guiding policies for work drawn up by the National Conference; to elect the President, Vice President, General Secretary and members of the Standing Committee; when necessary names may be proposed for co-option or withdrawal, or an honorary President may be elected to serve until the following National Christian Conference. The plenary of the National Conference shall be convened jointly by the Standing Committee of the CCC and that of the TSPM every two years, or earlier or later when necessary.

Article IX The Standing Committee of the CCC shall consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, General Secretary and members of the Standing Committee whose period of service shall run until the next National Christian Conference. It shall deal with committee business when the plenary is not in session. When necessary, names may be proposed for co-option or withdrawal and consultants may be invited. These shall serve until the following National Conference. The President shall, with the assistance of the Vice-Presidents and the General Secretary, direct the work of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee of the CCC shall be convened by the Executive Committee once a year, or earlier or later when necessary.

Article X Deputy General Secretaries shall be nominated by the General Secretary, subject to approval by the Standing Committee.

Article XI The Standing Committee, together with the Standing Committee of the TSPM, shall, when its work requires, appoint working groups or other specialized committees, which shall work under the joint direction of the General Secretary of the CCC and the Secretary-General of the TSPM. These specialized committees shall serve during the term of the Standing Committees which appoint them.

Article XII The President, Vice-Presidents and General Secretary shall comprise the Executive Committee to deal with the important daily business of the Standing Committee. It shall meet every six months. When necessary, the CCC Executive Committee shall meet jointly with its counterpart in the TSPM.

Article XIII Funds for the CCC shall be raised by the Standing Committee.

Article XIV The CCC shall be based in Shanghai.

Article XV The CCC may not be dissolved except by decision of the National Chinese Christian Conference.

Article XVI The authority to interpret this constitution lies with the incumbent Standing Committee.

Article XVII This constitution takes effect upon approval by the National Chinese Christian Conference and may be subject to revision by that Conference.

Passed 2 January 1997.
The Chinese text governs.

On The Revisions to the Constitutions - Wang Juzhen

We are deeply grateful to our all-powerful and all-loving God that since the Fifth National Conference, the TSPM and CCC, under the guidance of God the Father, have made great progress in every facet of their work. Now, with past achievements as our foundation, we face new tasks and new challenges. For this, we pray God the Father to add new grace to us and new strength, that we may run the course before us with joy. At this juncture, as the new leadership takes over from the old, we also think of how to make suitable revisions in the Constitutions of the TSPM and the CCC to meet these new tasks and challenges. At the joint meeting of the two Standing Committees in November 1995, the committee members conscientiously discussed the draft of proposed revisions of the Constitutions, and put forward many helpful views and suggestions. The preparatory group for revision of the Constitutions set up by the Standing Committees at this time began work following that meeting and on the basis of the committee members' views drafted the second draft of the two revised Constitutions which were sent to the Executive Committees of the two bodies for their responses. Again in July 1997, a joint meeting of the Executive Committees was held at which these were discussed. After this meeting, the preparatory group produced a third draft which was again sent to the Executive Committees for their views. The draft sent to the two Standing Committees for their views was already the fourth draft. Only after these several revisions were the present revised Constitutions (draft revisions) produced, which delegates to this Conference now have for deliberation. For the delegates' convenience in discussing the drafts, I would like to make the following points on behalf of the preparatory revision group:

1) TSPM. Article II originally dealt with the organization's aim and duties. In the revised document, these become two separate articles, with the aim contained in Article 11 and the duties of the organization in Article III. The aim and the duties of an organization are two different concepts: the aim tells why the organization was established, what its goal is, the duties explain what the main work of the organization will be based on this aim. It is clearer to deal with these separately.

2) TSPM. The phrase "safeguarding national stability" in the last sentence of the old Article II has been changed to "safeguarding national unity and stability" (new Article 111). This is because safeguarding national unity is a basic requirement for a patriotic citizen and for us as patriotic Christians. Only when a nation has unity and stability can it pursue development.

3) CCC. Article II in the original was easily misconstrued: `. . . to uphold the national constitution and the laws, regulations and policies of the land" was given as one of the aims of the CCC. In fact, the meaning of this sentence is: that the activities and work of the church be carried on within the bounds of the national constitution and the laws, regulations and policies of the land. The gist of the present sentence is: the aim of the CCC is to unite all Christians under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and run the Chinese church well under the four obediences. These "four obediences" are: 1) to the truth of the Bible; 2) to the three-self patriotic principle; 3) to the Chinese Church Order; And 4) to the national constitution, laws, regulations and policies. In the same Article, "with one heart and strength" has been changed to "with one heart and unity

of purpose". This is a rhetorical change. Some delegates felt the new form, being a biblical usage, touched a more familiar chord.

4) CCC. Articles III and IV contain material relating to duties and some co-workers suggested that these be combined into one. But other co-workers felt that Article III explained that the present Chinese church was unified and we should do our utmost to defend union, yet within union we must carry out the important principle of mutual respect. This is a highly important duty and should have its own Article. We accepted this latter view. Article IV speaks of some of our major work. Herein to the original wording "promotes the formulation of church orders for local churches" has been added "formulation and perfection". This is in line with current conditions. At present most provincial Christian Councils have formulated their own church orders. Now, besides urging the minority without to draft their own, we must also urge the improvement of those which are already in existence.

5) Article III of the old TSPM version and Article V of the CCC version both deal with two matters: one is the status and function of the National Conference and the other is the relationship between the TSPM and the CCC. These two issues are different in nature. In the revisions these have been separated into two articles, Articles IV and V in the new TSPM Constitution and Articles V and VI in that of the CCC. TSPM Article IV and CCC Article V deal with the nature and duties of the National Conference and are longer than the original articles, making the nature and duties of the National Conference much clearer and more explicit. TSPM Article V and CCC Article VI deal with the relationship between these two bodies.

6) The revision of TSPM Article III and CCC Article V illustrates the following issue: within the larger organization of the TSPM or the CCC there are different levels of organization. How these different levels are produced and operate should be dealt with in the Constitutions. The present revision strives to do this. Article V speaks of the National Conference as the highest level of authority and that its duty is to produce the national committees of the TSPM and CCC, etc. The revised TSPM Constitution Article IV and the revised CCC Article V deal with the formation of the National Conference.

   The next level are the national committees of the TSPM and the CCC. The old Constitutions (TSPM Article V and CCC Article VII) dealt with their formation. In the revision these have been separated into Nos. VII and VIII, but the wording is unchanged. The old Constitutions did not explain the responsibilities and duties of the national committees and this is rectified in the revisions.

   There are two further levels of organization, the Standing Committee and the Executive Committee. These two levels are both formed from the plenary (TSPM Article VII; CCC Article VIII). Their responsibilities and duties are very similar. The Standing Committee deals with the committee affairs (TSPM Article VIII; CCC Article IX); the Executive Committee deals with day to day work (TSPM Article X1; CCC Article

X11). Also, the revised Constitutions clearly set out who may call a meeting at the various levels; further details are unnecessary.

7) Article X of the old TSPM Constitution and Article XII of that of the CCC both dealt with the term of office at all levels. These have been revised as follows: sections dealing with the term of the National Conference as well as with the duties incumbent on membership (revised TSPM Article IV; CCC.' Article V), sections dealing with the term of the Committees and the formation and duties of the committees (revised TSPM Article VII; CCC Article VIII), sections dealing with the term of the Standing Committees and the formation and duties of the same (revised TSPM Article VIII; CCC Article IX).

8) Wording in the old TSPM Constitution Article XI and the CCC Constitution Article XIII relating to the direction of the work of the Standing Committee by the Chair (TSPM) and President (CCC) has been moved to the respective Articles dealing with the organization of the Standing Committee and its duties (revised TSPM Article VIII; CCC Article IX).

9) Article IV in the old TSPM Constitution and Article VI in the CCC version related to the relationship between the national level bodies and their local counterparts. In addition to "setting up channels" and "exchange of experiences" which have been retained, emphasis should be placed upon a "consultative" relationship, so the former wording, "coordination", has been changed to "consultation", a term far different from the original. Coordination is one-directional, indicating that the two national bodies would regulate relations among local Christian councils; while consultation is bi-directional, multi-directional. National to local, local to national, local to local - in all cases the spirit of "consultation" should be developed and applied in all kinds of work. The old wording "common problems" has been changed to "widespread problems". This is because "common problems" implies that these are to be found in every provincial (municipality; autonomous region) Christian Council, whereas "widespread" does not necessarily imply that these exist in every case.

10) Both old Constitutions have sections dealing with the establishment of specialized committees; these are working administrative levels, similar to the working bodies in the TSPM and CCC. So in the revised Constitutions one sentence was specially added..... which shall work under the joint direction of the Secretary-General of the TSPM and the General Secretary of the CCC".

It was pointed out during the revision process that the nature and duties of specialized committees should be spelled out in the related articles. We attempted to include this suggestion, but since it touched upon already existing specialized committees, there were many difficulties involved. Since the concrete conditions of each committee differed, to unify their nature and duties at present was not really possible, and we could only speak of these in generalities. We hope that the next Conference can accomplish this.

11) There are other variations in wording in addition to those mentioned. For example, Article XI of the old TSPM Constitution has been moved to precede Article X which becomes the new Article XI (there are similar examples in the CCC Constitution). These changes have been made to improve the flow of the ideas.

Ms. Wang Juzhen, scientist and inventor, is a Vice-Chairperson of the TSPM, as well as of the Shanghai TSPM.

Some of the wordings of the old Constitutions quoted here may not be exactly as given in the English translation in general use. The Chinese text should govern.

Christian Church Order

Preface

Under the loving guidance of our heavenly Father, the vast majority of local churches in China have already embarked upon the path of church unity. So that the Church of Our Lord can grow up in a healthy way, and according to Biblical teachings, so that "all things be done decently and in order", Christian Councils and Three-Self organizations in more than twenty provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities (hereafter, provinces) have respectively since 1984, drafted church orders of their own for trial use. In 1987, the Standing Committees of the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee (TSPM) passed the "Resolution on the Advancement of Self-Government through the Drafting of a Church Order", and established a "Committee on Church Order" to promote and assist local Christian church affairs organizations in the drafting of church orders or the perfecting of church orders which had been drafted. On 30 December 1991, the Joint Standing Committee of the two national Christian organizations passed a model "Church Order for Trial Use in Chinese Churches" to be used as a standard for common reference among churches in each place. Since its trial use, this order has contributed to the establishment of local church orders appropriate for churches in different places, and places where the order has needed to be supplemented and revised have also been discovered. Now, after a trial period of five years, and with revisions, we present this "Chinese Christian Church Order".

The basic content of this church order is in accordance with the teachings of the Bible, the inheritance of church tradition and the life of the church ecumenical, and integrated with the actual context of the church in China today; it has its own Chinese characteristics. According to present needs, the order is divided into separate items dealing with the Church, believers, the sacraments, ministry, churches and meeting points and administration. Because there are differences in the history, denominational background and pattern of development of churches in different parts of China, church affairs organizations in different provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities may draft or revise their own church orders according to this one, or implement their own rules and regulations, providing they do not violate this church order. Because some churches and meeting points have their own view of the church and tradition, under the premise that they observe the three-self principle and mutual respect, they can develop according to their own traditions, but they may not independently formulate a church order under a denominational name. Where there is the need, the local church affairs organization should serve and resolve differences with these churches and meeting points. With regard to church affairs, the China Christian Council should strengthen its connection, guidance and supervision with provincial level church affairs organizations.

1. The Church

1.1 The Christian Church is called by God to be a community of believers to serve Christ as Lord. Christ is the head of the Church, the Church is the Body of Christ,

the Household of God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The faith of the Church is founded upon the Bible and The Apostles Creed.

1.2 The Chinese church shares in the life of fellowship of the Church universal and enjoys relationships with churches in other places on the basis of equality and friendship: at the same time, the Chinese church is an independent, sovereign and self-run church, neither subordinate in its relationship to churches overseas, nor subject to the control of any foreign church body.

1.3 Local churches in China all have two characteristics: they are spiritual communities who worship Christ and who should build up the Body of Christ according to the Bible, and they are Chinese social organizations which should observe the Chinese constitution, laws, regulations and government policies, and support social progress, national construction and world peace.

1.4 According to the principles self-government, self-support and self-propagation, local churches (including meeting points, here and in what follows), guided by church affairs organizations and with the support of Three-Self patriotic organizations, should unite believers in the conscientious observance of church order, so that with one heart and mind, they can do all their work well.

1.5 All local churches should take into consideration the different spiritual experiences and needs of believers, and in matters of faith, tradition and liturgy there should be mutual respect and mutual acceptance, not attacks and forced unity. At the same time, efforts should be made to maintain a heart of unity according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. Believers

2.1 All those who, in their thirst for salvation, attend Church to listen to the Word of God and take part in worship gatherings are termed "seekers". After a seeker has been baptized, and enrolled in a church, she formally becomes a "believer" and member of the church.

2.2 Believers should observe the teachings of the Bible, and do their utmost to abide by church regulations, support the work of the church and take part in the running of its affairs.

2.3 Believers should be good citizens, patriotic and law-abiding, and carry out their social responsibility to the best of their ability.

2.4 If a believer commits a serious impropriety, transgresses church regulations or violates criminal law, s/he should be instructed and admonished by a clergy person. If there are repeated offenses and the seriousness of the circumstances so warrant, the individual may be denied communion or removed as a church member, following a report by the church or meeting point to the local church affairs organization, and ratification of the report by that organization.

3. The Sacraments

3.1 There are two major kinds of sacraments in the church: baptism (by immersion or sprinkling) and Holy Communion (or the breaking of bread).

3.2 Seekers who have taken part in church services over a certain period of time, generally not less than one year, who are willing to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, who have clearly repented or have been born again, and whose behavior is upright and law-abiding, can apply to the church for enrollment in a catechism class in order to study the Bible. the catechism and the duty of believers. Those who pass an examination on faith and morals administered by a pastor or church worker may be received for baptism.

3.3 There are two forms of baptism which local churches may use at the request of those about to be baptized: baptism by sprinkling (where water is poured on the top of the head) or baptism by immersion (where the whole body is submerged).

3.4 All baptized Christians may receive Holy Communion.

3.5 The service of Holy Communion should be conducted in reverence, with the form of liturgy decided upon by the local church. Each church may follow one or more communion liturgies.

3.6 The sacraments should be openly administered in churches or meeting points with a member of the clergy officiating. Elderly and infirm church members may receive the sacraments in their homes.

4. Ministry

4.1 Ministerial Designations: *The ministry refers to ordained church workers who* can administer the sacraments. Churches in China at present use the following ministerial designations, which follow the Bible and church tradition:

- Bishop (two different Chinese terms are used, reflecting different church traditions) - has a wider area of pastoral responsibility, but does not have special administrative authority.
- Pastor (including ordained Elders from some church traditions, here and in what follows) - responsible for church work of all kinds, the management of churches and meeting points, the administration of sacraments, the nurture and teaching of believers.
- Teacher (or Assistant Pastor) - assists the pastor in the nurture and teaching of believers, the management of churches and meeting points, and may also administer the sacraments. Elder - assists pastors and teachers in the management of churches and meeting points, where his or her responsibility is limited to a specific church and related meeting points. If needed, and with the

approval of the local church affairs organization, elders may also take part in the nurture and teaching of believers, and the administration of the sacraments.

In addition, there may be church workers who have not yet been ordained, and who do not administer sacraments, but who have been appointed or elected by the church and approved by the church affairs organization, and are designated as follows:

- Preacher - individuals who have received theological education or special training and may preach and nurture believers.
- Deacon - a believer responsible for some specific area of church affairs. Clergy and preachers (teachers) are commonly called pastoral workers. The foregoing designations may be adopted by churches according to their original traditions and actual conditions.

4.2 Qualifications for ministry:

4.2.1 The Bible requires that all ministers should have: (1) a pure Christian faith and a rich spiritual life; (2) an excellent character, behavior and witness; (3) a will to serve Christ and experience in church service; (4) the love and esteem of most believers.

4.2.2 Clergy should be patriotic and law abiding, with a good reputation in church and society.

4.2.3 Clergy should uphold the three-self principle in running the church well, uniting believers on the road of love-country and love-church, glorifying God and serving humanity, and should practice mutual respect regarding the special characteristics of different Christian beliefs.

4.2.4 Clergy should not be limited by gender, and in ordination, men and women are equal. These four qualifications also apply to preachers (teachers).

4.2.5 A bishop should be above the age of forty, have solid theological achievements or published works, have rich pastoral experience, be able to unite co-workers and fellow Christians and be held in high esteem by believers.

4.2.6 Pastors should have a formal theological education, and experience in pastoral work. Those who have graduated from a standard program of theological education (four years) and above, should have a minimum of two years' experience in pastoral work; those who have graduated from a special program of theological studies (two years) or from a Bible School (two years), should have a minimum of three years' experience in pastoral work.

4.2.7 Teachers should have a formal theological education and experience in pastoral work. Those who have graduated from a standard program of theological education (four years) and above, should have a minimum of one year of

experience in pastoral work; those who have graduated from a special program of theological studies (two years) or from a Bible School (two years), should have a minimum of two years' experience in pastoral work. Those who have served one or more years as a teacher. are qualified to become pastors.

4.2.8 Those who have completed an informal course of theological studies or a theological education by correspondence course and who wish to become teachers or pastors must have their academic credentials certified by the unit which conducted the course. Such candidates should have a minimum of three years' experience in pastoral work.

4.2.9 Those who have studied the Bible and theology on their own and who wish to become teachers or pastors, must pass an examination to prove that they are up to standard. Such candidates should have a minimum of four years' experience in pastoral work.

4.2.10 Elders are not required to have theological education, but they should uphold orthodox teaching and have many years' experience of service to the church. In order to administer the sacraments and to preach, elders should he trained by the provincial level church affairs organization.

4.3. Procedures for the Ordination of Ministry:

4.3.1 The nomination of bishops Should proceed from consultation between national church bodies and the relevant provincial church affairs organization, and the candidate should he approved by the church affairs organization of his or her province and agreed upon by a majority of provincial church affairs organizations. After the candidacy has been confirmed, the date for the service of consecration will be set.

4.3.2 Candidates qualified to be pastors should first apply in writing for ordination, and, upon selection by the committee of their church or meeting point, should be recommended by the local, city, county or prefectural church affairs organization to the provincial church affairs organization. The provincial church affairs organization shall select three or more pastors to form an ordination committee and examine the candidate(s). For candidates deemed qualified, a date for the service of ordination will be set.

4.3.3 Teachers who wish to become pastors should apply, be selected, recommended and examined according to the same procedures as those applying to be ordained.

4.3.4 Candidates qualified to be elders should apply with the recommendation of their local church organization. The local or city church affairs organization shall select three or more pastors and elders to form an ordination committee and examine the candidate(s). For candidates who are qualified, the date for ordination will be set, and it will be reported to the provincial church affairs organization for the record.

4.4. The liturgy for ordination to the ministry:

4.4.1 At least three bishops must take part in the laying on of hands for the consecration of a bishop, and other respected pastors of high standing may also participate in the ceremony.

4.4.2 At least three pastors are required for the laying on of hands in the ordination of a pastor.

4.4.3 At least three pastors and elders (one of whom must be a pastor) are required for the ordination of an elder.

4.4.4 The liturgy of ordination should be solemn and conducted openly within the church. Clergy should not receive or give private favors for ordination.

4.5 The Discipline of Clergy: If a clergy person commits a serious impropriety, transgresses church regulations, spreads heretical teachings or violates criminal law, s/he should be disciplined according to a formal decision made in a deliberative conference of the appropriate church affairs organization, bishops at the national level, pastors and teachers at the provincial level, and elders at the local or city level: discipline can include admonishment, temporary suspension of church duties, removal from office, defrocking and removal from church rolls. Removal from church office can only be by decision of a formal meeting of the local church affairs organization.

Preachers are subject to discipline through a formal decision made in a deliberative conference of the local church affairs organization: discipline can include admonishment, temporary suspension of church duties, removal from office, and removal from church rolls. Removal from church office can only be by decision of a formal meeting of the local church affairs organization.

5. The Organization and Management of Churches (and Meeting Points)

5.1 Requirements for the establishment of a church or meeting point:

5.1.1 A church should have:
(1) A requisite number of believers;
(2) An appointed place for worship gatherings;
(3) A full time or voluntary ordained church worker responsible for Christian nurture;
(4) A management organization or preparatory management organization;
(5) A church constitution; (6) A source of income.

5.1.2 A meeting point should have:

(1) A fixed number of believers;
(2) A fixed meeting place;
(3) A recognized preacher (not necessarily ordained);
(4) A management organization or preparatory management organization;
(5) A meeting point constitution;
(6) A source of income.

5.1.3 City and county level church affairs organizations should conscientiously take into consideration the believers' worship needs, and, according to the above requirements, should do their utmost to assist in the setting up of' churches and meeting points, in a rational system of distribution.

5.1.4 When a meeting point fulfills the requirements necessary for a church, it can become a church after a formal decision has been made by the city or county church affairs organization, and this is reported to the provincial church affairs organization for the record.

5.2 Church and Meeting Point Organizations: Church and Meeting Point organizations refer to the management structure of individual churches and meeting points. A church establishes a church affairs organization (of' at least seven persons), and a meeting point establishes a church affairs group (of at least three persons). Members of these organizations should be elected by the believers of the church or meeting point themselves or named through consultation, with fixed terms of three to five years, and members eligible for re-election. Church workers should be members ex officio.

5.3 The Managerial Authority of Church and Meeting Point Organizations: Church and meeting point organizations should be fully democratic, broadly seeking out the opinions of believers, and working co-operatively to administer the church with one heart and mind.

5.3.1 The management of church affairs:

(1) All gatherings, worship services and liturgies should be appropriately arranged, and proceed in an orderly fashion, so that God is worshipped in spirit and in truth, and disorder is avoided.

(2) Preaching should be done by a regular church worker, or one with a gift for preaching who has undergone church training and is an approved voluntary worker. This will prevent people who disseminate heretical teaching that can split the church, or who carry out illegal activities which harm believers.

(3) A register of church members should be established: it should be appropriately organized as part of the historical records and files of the church or meeting point.

(4) A healthy church or meeting point organization or conference system should regularly meet to discuss official business. Routine decisions require a simple majority of adult members. Decisions on major issues (for example, large purchases, the recommendation of a person for ordination, etc.) require a two-thirds vote of adult members.

(5) A retirement system for church workers should be established to guarantee their livelihood. Retired church workers can continue to assist in the work of the church providing that this is not injurious to their health, and according to the needs of the church or meeting point and the willingness of the individual involved.

(6) Church work should be guided and supervised by the local church affairs organization. When the church affairs organization discusses matters of concern to the church or meeting point, it should fully coordinate with the meeting point or church affairs organization and listen to their opinions; after a decision is reached on this basis, the church or meeting point organization should make concerted effort in its implementation.

5.3.2 The management of church finances:

(1) Church and meeting point organizations should set up a finance committee which strictly observes financial discipline in the work of the church, and establishes a financial management system which includes the opening of the offering box, the keeping of accounts, the issuing of receipts and making cash deposits in the bank. In principle, pastoral workers should not be responsible for bookkeeping and accounting.

(2) Believers should be encouraged to give freely to the work of the church, but they should not be forced to contribute. Church and meeting point organizations should regularly report to the congregation on church finances, and when necessary, the church affairs organization has the authority to inspect the books.

(3) A strict system of financial examination and approval should be established. Major expenditures should be discussed by the church or meeting point organization.

5.3.3 The Management of Church Property and Church Affairs:

(1) Church property is collectively owned, and the church or meeting point organization is responsible for it. A person or committee should be clearly

designated to be responsible for church property, and a management system should be established.

(2) The general work of the church or meeting point should be organized, including property management and repair, utilities, safety, and fire prevention.

5.3.4 The church or meeting point organization should uphold self-government, self-support and self-propagation in order to resist individuals or groups at home and abroad who interfere with or seek to undermine the three-self principle. This "Chinese Christian Church Order" is issued following discussion and approval by the Standing Committees of the China Christian Council and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. It may be revised by the same body. The right of interpretation of this document lies with the Chinese Christian Committee on Church Order.

Passed 28 December 1996.

The Chinese text governs.

Translated by Philip L. Wickeri.

The Sixth Standing Committee of The Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement

Honorary Chairperson:

Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting), Bishop, Principal of Nanjing (Jinling) Union Theological Seminary

Advisors:

Ren Zhongxiang, Elder, Vice-President of Shanghai Christian Council
Shi Ruzhang, General Secretary of the National Committee of the YWCAs in China
Wang Shenyin, Bishop, President of Shandong Christian Council
Yin Jizeng, Rev., President of Beijing Christian Council

Chairperson:

Luo Guanzong, Chairperson of Shanghai TSPM Committee

Vice-Chairpersons:

Deng Fucun, Rev. Chairperson of Zhejiang TSPM Committee
Fan Fengling, President of Yunnan Christian Council
Ji Jianhong, Elder, Vice-Chairperson of Jiangsu TSPM
Li Shoubao, Honorary General Secretary of the National Committee of the YMCAs in China.
Liu Nianfen, Rev., President of Hubei Christian Council Shen Derong
Mr., Chairperson of Shanghai TSPM
Shi Zesheng, Rev., Vice-Chairperson of Beijing TSPM (Manchu ethnic minority)
Wang Juzhen, Scientist and inventor, Vice-Chairperson of the Shanghai TSPM
Zheng Yugui, Rev., President of Fujian Christian Council

Members of the Standing Committee:

Cao Guanghua
Chen Zhong
Deng Fucun
Fan Chengzu
Fan Fengling
Feng Hao
Fu Xianwei
*Gan Liming
Han Bide
Hua Changji
*Liu Shengmei
Lu Jianming
Lu Mingyuan
Luo Baoluo
Luo Guanzong
*Ma Jianhua
Shen Derong
Shi Zesheng
(Manchu ethnic
Ji Jianhong
*Jin Wei
Kou Youguo
Li Baole
Li Ming
LiShoubao
Li Xunru
Liang Baoluo
Liang Ming
*Liu Nianfen
Wang Huairen
*Wang Juzhen
*Wang Shengcai
Wu Jianyin
Xu Minghan
Xu Rulei
*Yang
Yang Zhihua
Yang Zhouhuai

Su Weiyuan
Sun Jinwei
Sun Zhaogui
Zhao Zhi'en
Zheng Yugui

(Of the 42 members, eight are women)

Secretary General:
Deng Fucun

Associate Secretary Generals:
*Jin Wei, Xu Minghan

Note: The original lists were ordered according to strokes of the Chinese characters. The names have been alphabetized for convenient reference, Reprinted from *China Talk,* March 1997.

The Fourth Standing Committee of The China Christian Council

Honorary President:

Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting), Bishop, Principal of Nanjing (Jinling) Union Theological Seminary

Advisors:

Ren Zhongxiang, Elder, Vice-President of Shanghai Christian Council
*Shi Ruzhang, General Secretary of the National Committee of the YWCAs in China
Wang Shenyin, Bishop, President of Shandong Christian Council
Yin Jizeng, Rev., President of Beijing Christian Council

President:

Han Wenzao, Dr., General Secretary of the Amity Foundation

Vice-Presidents:

Cai Yuesheng, Rev., President of Sichuan Christian Council
*Cao Shengjie, Rev., Vice-President of Shanghai Christian Council
Chen Zemin, Rev., Vice-Principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary
Fan Xiuyuan, Rev., Executive Vice-President of Guangdong Christian Council
Su Deci, Rev., Vice-President of Shanghai Christian Council
Sun Xipei, Rev., President of Zhejiang Christian Council
*Wu Ai'en, Rev., Vice-President of Liaoning Christian Council (Korean ethnic minority)
Xiang Jianhua, Mr., Vice-President of Anhui Christian Council

Members of the Standing Committee:

Hua Yaozeng	Kong Yuehan	Li Yaping
Lin De'en	Lin Zhihua	Ling Jiyun
Lu Dezhi	*Lu Zhibin	Luo Zesheng
*Peng Cui'an	Shen Cheng'en	Shi Qigui
Xu Xiaohong	Yang Guangdao	*Yao Zengyi
Yu Xinli	Yu Yaokun	Bao Jiayuan
Cai Yuesheng	*Cao Shengjie	Chen Zemin
Cheng Buyun	Fan Xiuyuan	Gao Chongsheng
Gao Jianguo	*Gao Ying	Gong Guangming
Han Wenzao	Helian Zhaoxuan	Su Deci
Sun Xipei	Tong Ping'an	Wang Weifan
Wang Zhenren	Wu Ai'en (Korean ethnic minority)	
Wu Wei	Xiang Jianhua	Xu Changtai
Zhang Zhongxin	Zheng Zhengguang	Zhou Rongmin
Zhu Faqing (Lisu ethnic minority)		

(Of the 42 members, seven are women)

General Secretary: Su Deci (part-time)

Associate General Secretaries: Bao Jiayuan, Shen Cheng'en, Yu Xinli

* = Ms.

Note: The original lists were ordered according to strokes of the Chinese character. The names have been alphabetized for convenient reference.

Reprinted from *China Talk*, March 1997.

Resolution of the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference

The Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference has conscientiously considered the Work Report of the Fifth Standing Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China and the Third Standing Committee of the China Christian Council, entitled "Build Up the Body of Christ with One Heart and United Effort: Running the Church Even Better According to the Three-Self Principle." It is the opinion of this Conference that the assessment of work since the Fifth National Chinese Christian Conference contained in the Work Report follows seeking truth from facts, that it grasps the crucial facts in its summing up of the previous five years' experience and that its recommendations for the work of the new Conference are feasible and realistic.

The Conference takes special note that the Work Report produced a clear summation of the chief substance of "running the church well according to the three-self principle" as follows: independence; love for country and love for church; to further unity; to carry out the "three wells". Such a clear exposition aids further clarification of direction and running the church well, and the Conference was in agreement with this Report.

It is the opinion of this Conference that with our direction clear, we should work steadfastly and diligently, putting our efforts firmly into the "running" of the church, making the Chinese church even better run, better able to earn the affection of Christians and all Chinese people. The Conference calls upon all Christians in China to strive with one mind and one heart to thoroughly implement the ten tasks put forward in the Work Report, that the Chinese church receive even more grace, and God's holy name be even more greatly glorified.

Adopted 2 January 1997.
The Chinese text governs.

Resolution of the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference Endorsing the "Resolution of the Central Committee on Important Issues in Strengthening Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization"

The Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference warmly endorses the "Resolution of the Central Committee on Important Issues in Strengthening Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization." Socialist spiritual civilization is an important special characteristic of socialist society, an important goal and pledge of the construction of modernization. The construction of socialist spiritual civilization touches on the total realization of the great blueprint to carry China into the next century and the flourishing development of the socialist enterprise in China. Chinese Christians are members of the family of the nation, bound together by a common cause, sharing weal and woe, and we wish with all our hearts for our nation to flourish and prosper, and hope that China's spiritual civilization develops to a high degree.

The "Resolution" calls for: "encouragement and support of all moral thinking that is beneficial to the liberation and development of production forces in socialist society; all moral thinking that is beneficial to national unity, ethnic unity and social progress; all moral thinking that is beneficial to the pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty and resists falsehood, evil and scandal and extends a healthy atmosphere; all moral thinking that is beneficial to the fulfillment of citizens' rights and duties and securing a good life through genuine labor." Christianity is a religion rich in moral and ethical elements and we should strive to fully develop those positive factors in Christian doctrine and order which have a bearing on ethics and morality, in order to serve socialist society and the people. It is the view of this Conference that for Christians to contribute to the construction of socialist spiritual civilization in moral and ethical matters is a demand placed on us by our faith and a hope placed on us by our nation.

Chinese Christians are patriotic and church-loving; many bear beautiful witness which glorifies God and benefits the people. At the same time, we need to see that there are more than a few negative phenomena within the church at present, which run contrary to the construction of spiritual civilization. This Conference calls upon the great masses of colleagues and fellow-believers to give a high level of attention to existing problems, and to strengthen the building up of the church in the course of the construction of spiritual civilization, to enable the church to go further in adapting to socialist society.

The construction of spiritual civilization is rich in substance; in addition to calling for a raising of the level of morality, it also calls for a heightening of patriotic awareness, of the level of scientific education, of the viewpoint of democracy and law, the quality of life, etc. This Conference calls on Christian Councils and churches throughout the nation to strive to help Christians to raise their own all-round quality, to enable the call "A good Christian should be a good citizen" to become common knowledge of the masses of co-workers and fellow-believers, and to strive to make greater contributions to the construction of spiritual civilization.

Adopted 2 January 1997.
The Chinese text governs.

Sharing Women's Work - Presented by Gao Ying

Allow me to share with you some aspects of the CCC's women's work, which is dear to the hearts of all delegates. We all know that women's work is abundant. At present we feel there are three areas which are in particular need of' the church's attention.

1) Women's committees should be organized at the provincial level as soon as possible.

The National Christian Committee on Women's Work was set up in 1993. In order to better organize and promote ministry to women throughout the church, the national committee promptly called on all provincial, municipal and autonomous region level Christian Councils in hopes that where resources were available, women's committees could be set up at the various levels. In places without such resources, we asked that the local church recommend a contact person to he responsible for maintaining ties with women's work in the province. Thanks be to God's grace, with the support of Christian Councils everywhere and especially with the promotion of' the responsible co-workers, in these three years, fourteen provinces, Municipalities and autonomous regions have set up women's committees, bringing the ratio of coverage to 53 per cent. In addition, six provinces named a contact person for women's work. As far as I know, one reason some places do not yet have women's committees is that they are waiting to hold a meeting which will elect a new slate of representatives and then make new arrangements, which is understandable. We hope that other provincial CCs which have not yet formed women's committees would put this item into your plan for your work in this year or at least next year. If you don't have the resources right now, we hope you can create them, so that when the time is right you can establish a women's committee structure as soon as possible.

2) Promotion of the ordination of women to the ministry.

Since the revival of the church following the Cultural Revolution, and due to the demands of the church's ministry, we have increasing numbers of women co-workers who, at God's call and inspiration, have been ordained to the Christian ministry. Presently nationwide, we have over 200 women clergy, 18 per cent of the total of ordained clergy, or one in six. Of course, if we look only at the numbers, the ratio of women doesn't seem low, but from another angle, it is obvious from the statistics that women account for upwards of 70 per cent of church members, which means that the tendency in gender terms among Chinese Christians is that women are in a majority. Thus, though the number of women clergy continues to grow, in comparison with the ratio of women believers, it still appears out of proportion and cannot satisfy the needs of developing women's work. According to the latest statistics from the national women's committee on the state of women's participation in the church at all levels, in different provinces the ratio of women clergy is clearly on the low side. In the two provinces with the highest number of Christians,[1] the ratio of women clergy is' rather low, at 8.2 and 9 per cent respectively. Some provinces have forty or more clergy, but only one of them is a women. Of course, when we put forward these issues none of the pastors and elders, co-workers or fellow believers here would misunderstand us: we are not simply looking at numbers while ignoring the issue of clergy quality. Neither do we wish to

[1] According to statistics compiled by the Amity News Service. the two provinces with the highest number of Christians are Henan and Zhejiang. with 2-3.5 million and 1.2-I.4 million Christians respectively

criticize any church, but simply to give examples. Our goal is simply to draw churches' attention to the importance of the ordination of women, so that those women co-workers who are qualified may soon join the ranks of ordained clergy and the lack of women clergy be redressed. I would especially like to point out that our emphasis on the importance of the ordination of women today does not arise simply from the necessity for male-female equality, nor is it purely to emphasize making full use of women's gifts, but truly comes out of the concrete needs of pastoral work. For example, there are many Christians who need pastoral care from clergy in areas other than faith and evangelism. They have many emotional and psychological difficulties and suffering for which they need help even more. These include a fairly large number of women Christians who yearn to confide their inmost pain to someone they can trust, who especially hope to receive pastoral comfort and encouragement. But because their sufferings are often very unique to the individual, they are also very private, and often it is not convenient to confide in a clergy person of the other sex. It would be more convenient and more natural to talk to a pastor who is also a woman. Truly, the necessity for the ordination of women does not end here. Women clergy need not limit their pastoral work to women Christians; they are meticulous, caring, patient. The ordination of women arises from the real needs of pastoral work in the Chinese church today. Women clergy play an irreplaceable role; therefore, the issue is not *whether* to ordain women.

3) Speed up greater participation by women in the leadership of the CCC.

In recent years, with the growth in the number of women clergy, the number of women in positions of leadership has also grown gradually. This is in line with the needs of our developing church today. We feel most blessed by the fact that today, in the leadership of some Christian Councils, the number of women has reached or surpassed 25 per cent. But there are also quite a few provincial level CCs where the number of women in the policy-making ranks is nowhere near what one might hope. According to the latest statistical information available from the women's committee, in some provincial CC leadership, there are no women at all; the ratio of women is 0. This means that in the policy-making echelon, the gender ratio is out of balance. Of course, we cannot measure the extent of women's participation or the equality of the sexes in the church simply on the basis of these statistics. Behind the numbers, there might be many complex issues, for example, in some provincial churches, even though the ratio of women clergy might compare favorably with the national level, for historical reasons, there are no women in the provincial level church leadership. Again, in certain areas, there are large numbers of Christians, yet because of the force of traditional culture or custom, even though there might be women theological graduates who have been out of seminary for years in those areas, some of whom are women evangelists gifted in preaching, not been one woman has been ordained to date. We feel that women's participation in leadership is not a matter of competing for places, just as our emphasis on having young people in the leadership does not mean that they will compete for places. Women in leadership represent the whole gender community and will increase the benefit to comprehensive development of all aspects of the CCC's work, including women's work. Women account for over 70 per cent of believers in the Chinese church. If women's work falls behind, it will affect the whole work of "running the church well". Because of this we call upon the whole church to stress the development of women's work and we ask all pastors and elders, co-workers and co-believers to pray for women's work. Thank you.

This report was prepared by several women: Rev. Gao Ying recently spent a year as a WCC intern in Geneva. Rev. Cao Shengjie is a Vice-President of the CCC and Vice-President of the Shanghai Christian Council. Rev. Liu Nianfen is a Vice-Chairperson of the TSPM and a Member of its Standing Committee, as well as President of the Hubei Christian Council. Ms. Wang Juzhen, scientist and inventor, is a Vice-Chairperson of the TSPM, as well as of the Shanghai TSPM.

Working Well at the Grassroots - Xu Xiaohong

I am truly fortunate to participate in this Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference and have the opportunity to learn from all of you here. This is especially true because this meeting has clarified the direction we are to go in running the church well according to the three-self principle. In his congratulatory remarks at the opening ceremony, Mr. Ye Xiaowen, head of the Religious Affairs Bureau, stressed that "Three-self must be upheld in order to run the church well, only if the church is well run can three-self be upheld. These two cannot be separated."

I was very moved when I read "Big Talk vs. Hard Work" by our co-worker Xu Fangzheng of Xuzhou in the December *1996 issue of Tian Feng,* and I realized that the key to running the church well according to the three-self principle lies in implementation. Today, the weakest churches in China are those at the grassroots in rural areas. Many of the church's problems arise at the grassroots, in the countryside. Rural work requires a firm foundation and hard workers, not just big talkers who aren't willing to roll up their sleeves; good and faithful servants, not those who like to sit high up; those who deny themselves and love others, those who are committed to the ministry of the church, not those who make the church a career or a way to get ahead

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus tells two parables about foundations. The correct method is to build a house on rock, not on sand. The difference between rock and sand is that one provides a firm foundation, which will not fall no matter what the circumstance; the other is a loose foundation and a house built there, buffeted by wind and rain, will surely fall. If the church is to adapt to today's socialist society, it can only run the church well by following the three-self principle, and grassroots and rural Church work is the foundation of the great edifice of the church in China.

There is something which has been bothering me for some time: many people, when they speak of Christianity, describe it as "chaotic". Heresy, the resurgence of denominations, foreign interference - there are numerous cases of all these. Even more frightening is the lack of unity within some churches which is greatly weakening the bonds within the body of the church. Many church leaders, at meetings large and small, have reminded us that we must make a good job of unity. I think especially of Bishop K.H. Ting, on his retirement and in his opening remarks to us here, who spoke sincerely and earnestly, stressing that we must improve unity. This is well worth pondering.

It is gratifying that in recent years the CCC and tile TSPM at the national level have begun to stress these problems. At the same time, they have done much in concrete terms for the grassroots churches. For example, some years ago, the supply of Bibles fell short of demand, but thanks to the efforts of the Amity Printing Co., the demand is basically being met for the mass of Christians. And the CCC provides Bibles free of charge to poor areas. The Committee on Theological Education provides reference books for theological students and financial assistance to students and graduates who need it. This has met with a very favorable response. This year Shaanxi province in particular received a large amount of support from the Committee on Rural Work. In addition to financial assistance for a year-long lay training course, funds were also provided for the northern and southern Shaanxi training courses in Hanzhong and Tongchuan and for another in Yichuan County. These training courses are for

the most part held in poor areas where there is a lack of clergy or in areas where heresy is rampant. The same committee also sent Reverends Gao Jianguo and Shi Chenghui, who have a great deal of experience, to conduct classes, and the results were very good. Taking the southern Shaanxi course as an example, this is a place which was deeply influenced by the "disciples" sect. Local evangelists are few and poorly trained, and the church is not well organized - in some cases not at all. Through the training course, a core of church workers was trained up, and along with theological graduates, they were able to make inroads on the extent of the "disciples" influence. Some persons in positions of responsibility in churches and meeting points began consciously to resist heresy and thus to purify the faith, and some churches organized a sound church structure. Believers' support can be gained by doing something concrete for them.

At the same time, we must see that there are still many problems in the church. Much of our work is not done thoroughly enough, and we have not done enough to promote the idea of running the church well according to the three-self principle. Outstanding problems remain in the areas of regaining church property, unity, poorly qualified evangelists and the graying of leadership. We should especially be aware that if we do not take a stand in grassroots churches in the countryside, heresy will take over.

Grassroots churches need a large contingent of bold individuals willing to sacrifice and work wholeheartedly for the Lord. In running the church well according to the three-self principle, the burden is heavy and the way is long, especially so for us young people - we are the ones who must take the Chinese church into the new century. Whether or not the Chinese church will be well run, well supported and well propagated depends on us. This is not only a matter of handing over to a new leadership; more, it requires that we study the older generation's tradition of commitment to three-self and loving the country and loving the church. We can't simply pay lip service to loving the country and loving the church, we must have a sense of calling, we must be promote the Three-Self Movement like Mr. Y.T. Wu and his generation of church leadership did. We must go into the grassroots, care for the believers and understand the needs of the church. Only in this way, will the believers place their trust in us and only then will it be possible for us to lead the mass of believers in contributing to openness and reform and the construction of material and spiritual civilization. If the resources are available, Christian Councils and TSPMs at all levels should do as government cadres do to gain first-hand experience, and take time each year to go down to the grassroots churches. This would enable them to reflect back the needs of the churches and believers.

We often say that eighty per cent of Chinese Christians are in the countryside. If we do not make a success of rural work at the grassroots, we cannot say that the Chinese church is well nun. Theological education and publications work should serve the church. I suggest that the work of the rural work committee be strengthened, that the pace of training personnel for the grassroots churches through theological education and lay training be stepped up. Production of materials such as manuals on basic tenets of faith and for Bible study must also be expedited.

In sum, work for grassroots churches should be placed at the forefront of the agendas of church bodies at all levels. I deeply believe that the more firmly grounded is our work in the

church at the grassroots, the better run the whole church will be. Let us work together to serve the people in the name of Jesus Christ, and to serve our brothers and sisters in a spirit of self-sacrifice. A Chinese church which is better administered, better Supported and better propagated will make an even better witness to the Church Ecumenical.

Xu Xiaohong is a member of the Standing Committee of the CCC.

Self-Support Difficulties in Mountain Churches - Luo Yingzhong

I am a pastor of a church in Anshun City in Guiyang province.

The policy of openness has put our nation in a very good situation and has given the impetus to rapid development in the church. The church's work, under the guidance of God and the direction of the three-self principle, has made many very pleasing achievements. The numbers of those who believe in God has grown rapidly, the ranks of Christians speedily enlarged, and the church today is in a good situation of unprecedented growth and prosperity.

However, as we rejoice over today's achievements, we must also take a clear look at the difficulties we face and the large and difficult issues which require urgent solution. Otherwise these will do unwarranted damage to the future development of the church and take away from our God.

We can describe the development of churches in the interior with the phrase "two wells and one difficulty". The two wells are self-government and self-propagation; the difficulty is self-support.

Let us look at self-government first. Churches in the interior are affected by the restricted development of transport and communication facilities there, as well as by many other factors. Legitimate or illegitimate sources of news from outside are very few. Thus, even though in the economically developed coastal cities with their good communications networks, troubles might flare up because of interference from outside forces, in the interior things are calm as water, with hardly a ripple. Even if the slightest rumor finds its way in, it's only talked of by a few individuals, heard by a few more and then forgotten. Opposition, infiltration or interference attributable to any outside forces is almost nil. Therefore the church's work of self-government has, together with government departments, all sectors in society and within the church itself, developed smoothly and has been very effective. The church has been able to fully and thoroughly implement instructions received from higher levels of the two bodies. This is the first "well".

Let us now turn to self-propagation. The fine qualities of honesty, simplicity, loyalty and goodness found among the people there, believers as well as those outside the church, and their innate hardworking, hospitable and enthusiastic nature, are factors which are very beneficial to many aspects of the work of propagation of the Christian gospel. The plain and easily understood truth of the Bible enters deeply into people's hearts and increasing numbers of people come to believe in the Lord and fervently love the church. Because of this the church's work of self-propagation has developed smoothly and has been very effective. This is the second "well".

In the work of self-support, the church has expended a great deal of sweat and tears and worked on many fronts, but development in this area has still been very difficult. The difficulty of self-support has been the biggest obstacle restricting church development for many years. One of the central contradictions is that in the churches of the interior, upwards of eighty per cent of believers come from rural villages in poverty-stricken areas. The faith of

these Christians is one hundred per cent and their love for the church is one hundred per cent. Each coin they give to the church is eked out somehow in their frugal lives and they are quite clear about the fact that in their beloved church's day to day finances, the least expense is pressing and difficult. They would like to do more and give more for the church, but, though rich in spirit, they lack money.

In the poorest mountain areas, where believers cannot even meet their own needs for food and shelter, they don't have the slightest hesitation about bringing their few coins out of their pocket for the church. This spirit of giving is part of the genuineness and absolute sincerity of their love for God and for the church. Seeing such deeply moving scenes, what can a pastoral worker have to say!

All we can say is that as children of God, we firmly believe in God's power. We do not fear poverty and furthermore, we want to lead the believing masses within and outside the church in the fight against poverty; we can win out against poverty. At the same time, we want to work toward the day when people in poverty-stricken areas, having shaken off poverty, become prosperous. This is a responsibility for which pastoral workers must work hard; they cannot shirk it.

Poverty-stricken areas are not entirely without resources. Speaking of the Anshun district, God in his extraordinary grace has bestowed over a million mu of non-cultivable land, abundant minerals and an inexhaustible supply of medicinal herbs in the mountains. This is an incalculable and precious wealth for this area, which we must lead the believers in the church to develop. To this end we have drafted some preliminary programs to open up the cultivation of various crops but several difficult obstacles stand in the way. What crops should we cultivate that will have a high economic value? How should we proceed in order to be successful'? Will our products, once we have successfully cultivated them, be in line with market demand'? Who will buy them; who shall we sell to'? Where will start up capital come from? Each item must be successfully solved or the whole program will fail. We are aware that our mountains are filled with easily gathered medicinal herbs, such as Duzhong, Tianma, Lingzhi, Huangcao, Tufuling, etc, which are recognized in Chinese medicine circles at home and abroad. In the past we have mobilized the believers to collect many kinds of these herbs to augment their income. However, we failed because we were unable to sell the herbs which were collected, we couldn't find a buyer and so they spoiled and were thrown away . . . .

There were two main reasons for this. One was that we didn’t have a solid grasp of the technique of collecting and processing and so lacked the guidance of the necessary technical knowledge. The second was that we did not have a grasp of market demand and lacked channels for transport and communication. If these two big problems could be solved, we firmly believe that we could lead believers to shake off poverty and set them on the road to prosperity.

To this end, we sincerely beg all of you here, fellow believers, to mobilize Christians in the churches to stretch forth the hand of love so that the more developed coastal regions join with poverty-stricken areas in the interior to establish a rapid and effective bridge for the

exchange of technology and commodity information, in order to develop economic prosperity in the interior and contribute the strength we need to alleviate poverty in the poorest areas.

Only when the broad masses of believers grow prosperous can the church do a better job of self-propagation, the development of the church proceed in a stable manner, and the spirit of the three-self principle be fully expressed. Only then will our church be worthy to be called a church that loves church and loves country, a church filled with the strength of the body of Christ.

If at the same time that we have a church that is well-governed and where propagation of the Lord's gospel is done well, we can also provide suitable ways to develop economically beneficial technology for believers and others inside and outside the church, the work we do will make the light of God's grace shine even more brightly.

Let us begin now to strive together and accomplish things that will glorify God and benefit people!

Rev. Luo Yingzhong is a pastor in Anshun. Guiyang province.

Family, Body and Spiritual Home - Sun Xipei

I Tim.3: 15, Eph. 1:23, 1 Pet.2:5, 1 Cor. 3:10-11

What is the essence of the church? The Bible uses eight parables, including the sheepfold, the golden lampstand, the new bride, the pillar and bulwark of truth, and so on, in speaking about the church. All of these illustrate the nature, content and mission of the church from different angles. But three are most basic because they illustrate the church's relationship with God the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, the church is the home of the eternal God; this demonstrates the relationship between the church and God the Father. Thus we use family terms of address: Heavenly Father, brothers, and sisters. The pillar which supports the family is love and within the church we have the Heavenly Father's love; this goes without saying. But is there mutual love among brothers and sisters within our church?

Within ourselves, we need a home, a shelter. What is our spiritual home? Psalm 84, a psalm of the Korahites, says, "How lovely is your dwelling place , O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints, for the courts of the Lord." David also mentioned this in Psalm 23 saying, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."

These psalms show very clearly the longing and thirst for the temple of the Lord as a spiritual home. The temple of the Old Testament is the church of the New Testament, and the church is our spiritual home. In Psalm 84:3 we find the beautiful phrases: "Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God."

And although the sparrow is the most insignificant of birds, and the swallow a migratory bird which seems to wander the earth, both can find a place to settle, a resting place, in the church. Can we achieve this in our church'? Can it truly become the spiritual home of all our sisters and brothers'? In this home of the eternal God, can they share in God's love, love each other and go forth to love those who need love?

Secondly, the church is the Body of Jesus Christ. This illustrates the relationship between the church and the Son. The Lord Jesus is the head of the church. The church is the Body. "the body of our Lord Jesus Christ."
In the Bible, three bodies are mentioned. The first is Adam's body. We know that God created Adam in his own image and according to his own likeness. God's purpose in doing this was that Adam should bring his image to life and make manifest his likeness. After God created Adam, his purpose was that Adam oversee and rule over everything in God's creation. That is to say, God wants Adam to carry out the plan and will of God. Unfortunately, Adam did not achieve this task. Therefore the second body appears, the second Adam.

The second Adam's body achieves its function. When someone asked Jesus to reveal God to them, Jesus said, "When people see me they have seen the Father." That means Jesus

has lived out the image of God. The Lord also said, " I have come to follow your will", meaning that Jesus fulfilled the will of God.

The Church too is a body. Today we complement one another so as to reveal God's image and carry out his will. The service of the church should be a service of the whole body, only that is a perfect church.

Thirdly, the church is the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells - this speaks of the relationship between the church and the Holy Spirit, which is to say that the church is a spiritual house. Building a spiritual house is the same as building any other house. The quality of two items is most important: the foundation and the building materials.

The one foundation of the church is Jesus Christ. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). We must build the church on the rock of Jesus Christ.

Next comes the building materials for the spiritual house. The church is a fellowship of those who have been elected and saved. Therefore the material of the church is all the brothers and sisters. We want all believers to become living stones, joining together to build the spiritual house.

What makes good building material? First of all we have to know in whom we believe. Faith has its roots and foundation. "Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ" (Heb. 6:1). The elevation of the quality of the faith of believers is also closely related to what we give them. Christianity values life highly; Christianity is the way to Life. But this life must be given substance through our daily lives and actions. Our lives must give witness to Life. One reason understanding of Christianity is increasing and people's reactions to it improving, lies in the good behavior of us Christians. People may not understand our faith, but they do understand our actions and our transformation. The word "Immanuel" comes from the Hebrew. We may not understand Hebrew, but happily the Bible has translated it and Immanuel becomes "God with us". Our faith needs to be translated into action so that when people see our good behavior they will glorify our Father who is in heaven. Good building materials --good Christians - not only should know "deeply in whom we believe", we should be "small spiritual houses" ourselves. Believers should be small spiritual houses. According to I Corinthians 6:19, ". . . do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God...?"

Here we see a very wonderful truth, one which I have mentioned above. Our souls need a shelter, a home. In Psalm 90, Moses tells us, "Lord you have been our dwelling place in all generations." Moses wanted God to be his home. Our God also needs a home, though "the heaven is his seat and the earth his footstool", God is not satisfied with this. He wants to live within us through the Holy Spirit.

God created heaven and earth and all things therein through his living word. But by his own hand he created humans and put the spirit within us. Only after creating humans could God rest content. Why'? Because then God also had a home. This in itself illustrates the value

of humankind, how highly God regards us. Even though Adam sinned and this home was temporarily destroyed, God willingly sacrificed his own beloved Son in exchange.

We take God as our dwelling place and God takes us as his dwelling place. As our Lord Jesus said, "You should be in me and 1 in you, always . . ." ("always with" should be translated as "live within"). This is what Paul meant by "in Christ" and "Christ in us". If this were true of all brothers and sisters in our church, if we were all spiritual houses, our church would truly become the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells - a great spiritual temple.

Dear colleagues, dear brothers and sisters all, we have been entrusted by Christians from all parts of the country to attend this meeting here in Beijing. As we discuss how to run the church well according to the three-self principle, we should frequently recall the nature of the church, its content and its mission.

May the head of the church, Jesus Christ, lead us as we open this Conference, that we may establish the church in China more closely in accord with the will of God. Then, in the words of Bishop Ting, the church "will satisfy our brothers and sisters and also delight all the people."

Rev. Sun Xipei is President of the Zhejiang Christian Council and a Vice-President and member of the Standing Committee of the China Christian Council. Rev. Sun preached this opening sermon at the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference, Beijing, 29 Dec. 1996.

Translated by Gail V. Coulson and Janice Wickeri.

Renewal - Li Yonghong

Text: Revelation 3:1-6

I was anxious the whole time as I was preparing this sermon. What should I share with all of you`? After the busyness of the Christmas worship service was done, I prayed to God to calm my heart, help me prepare the sermon and at the same time to prepare my own heart.

Many commentaries, coming to the seven churches found in Revelation, the final book of the Bible, use them as illustrations of the situation of the church in another era. The passage from Revelation we have just heard, Chapter 3, verses 1-6, was written by the disciple John, inspired by God's revelation, to the church in Sardis. This is God's word to Sardis long ago, but it is also his word to every church today. As 1 understand it, it is the word that the church today most needs to hear. At present the church universal is pursuing the revival of the church and the renewal of its spiritual life. We seek to do this in many ways - through prayer, through service - and all this is as it should be, but I believe that the most basic way, as well as the one which goes to the heart of the matter, is to return to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. When I read these verses of Scripture, I see that the failings of the church in Sardis which God points out are also found in our church today. This is something I have come to understand through my own church.

First, the church in Sardis existed in name only. I imagine that this church possibly had a pure organization and system of faith, an excellent liturgy, many worship gatherings and activities. But 1 am certain its piety was only an outward expression and was without the substance of piety. This church, lacking solid piety, was a church without ability, it could not be light for God and so God says of it here: ". . . you have a name of being alive, but you are dead." This is the severest accusation God makes of this church. Judged by appearances, it lives, but in reality, from the point of view of the spirit, it is dead.

The second failing of the church in Sardis is that it has not woken up. Historical and geographical books of the church tell us that Sardis was a small town situated 45 kilometers to the south of Thyativa. Geographically it was quite well situated, being built on a small mountain and protected by a precipice, which warded off attack. Yet history records that this small town was twice the victim of a surprise attack by enemies. Here God used the facts of history to tell them they should wake up. As Christians, they needed a spiritual awakening even more.

These two failings of the church in Sardis made me think of my own church where I serve, the Zhushikou church in Beijing. Zhushikou church is over eighty years old and because it has gone so long without repairs, the building is in a dangerous state. Moreover, with the rapid growth in the numbers of the saved in recent years, over a thousand persons come to worship God every Sunday. Clearly, the building is no longer suited to the needs of a revitalized church. Therefore, relying on the efforts of government departments at all levels, on the municipal Three-Self and Christian Council and upon ourselves in the church, last summer we were able to undertake renovations to strengthen the church fabric. Today the church building is renewed, the foundations strengthened, a leaning wall straightened,

and another emergency exit added. Thus the load bearing capacity of the structure has been greatly increased. This renewal of the physical church led me to wonder whether the temple of the Lord in our souls had also been strengthened'? Had we achieved unity between the inner and the outer, were we truly the church of God'? Had we woken up on time and prepared ourselves before God'? I believe this is the most urgent question our church has to ponder at present.

Today in our church, there are worship gatherings in every church almost daily, pastoral workers are incredibly busy, yet there is a voice we always hear, that is that our believers are unsatisfied. We're always hearing of this or that heresy that has infiltrated among our believers. If we compare ourselves to the church in Sardis, we see that the instruction God gave to the church in Sardis at that time is one we also need today. It is also a lesson for us, a wake-up call to us, a warning to us.

The church in Sardis was a church in name only. Perhaps its works were pleasing to others, but before God - God said not one was perfect, they were as if dead, this is the word used in the original language. In the New Testament, death is a metaphor for sin. As it says in I Timothy 5: 6: ". . . but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives." In Ephesians, we also find that before we had become Christians, because we lived in sin, we were actually dead. In the discussions over these last few days, I have heard about churches with this or that sort of problem and everyone has said that the reason for the appearance of these problems lies with people. People's weaknesses are the cause of the problem. Problems like quarrels, jealousy, and power plays within the church are caused for the sake of money or benefits. Many times a work of ministry is done taking what others will say into account, listening to what others say, more than trying to perceive the will of God, to the point that it becomes an obstacle to the ministry being carried out according to the will of God. Such problems have led to the appearance in our churches today of things which do not give glory to God or bring benefit to people. By name we should be churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, so full of ability, so full of the vitality of life, but at times in a few churches, a few persons have not borne beautiful witness to our Lord. This shows that at times we have not at all been limbs of the body pleasing to God. So a church without a vitality of life cannot bear a beautiful witness to the Lord, it is dead. We also at this time have good strong churches, we have many which have church orders, we have different meeting points of all sorts, we have very modern office facilities - as they say nowadays, our strengths have reached a definite standard. But our weaknesses, what we call our spiritual lives, what are they like'? If they are like those in the church of Sardis, the result would not bear thinking about.

The historical lesson of the church in Sardis stands before us like a mirror. Their two big inadequacies are all of a piece. They failed to wake up, paid attention only to the outer appearance and not the inner heart and as a result were twice victims of sneak attacks. Turning it around we see that God gave them a lesson, only by maintaining timely wakefulness and vigilance could they come back to life from the brink of death. Today, we are also tested from every side, because Satan is not reconciled to defeat, he will use every means available to tempt us into unfaithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ. What is more, these temptations are often hidden and difficult to discern, so we Christians have to confront temptation with alertness. In

Matthew 26: 41, the Lord says, "Stay awake and pray that you may he spared the test." And elsewhere he says, "Be on the alert; stand firm in the faith" (1Cor. 12: 13).

There are a great many instructions on being alert in the New Testament, because constant alertness in life should be the special attitude of a Christian. "Be on the alert! Wake up! Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, prowls around looking for someone to devour" (1Pet. 5: 8). The church in Sardis is a clear example of what this passage is saying.

But in verses four to six we are shown the hope for the church in Sardis. There it tells us that in the church in Sardis there are a few faithful believers, who are worthy of God's promise, they will be robed in white and have not polluted their clothing. Today our church, relying on the compassion of God, relying on God's grace and on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is in the midst of a revival, better and better with each day. Let us use God's lesson to Sardis to wake ourselves up, to recall our excitement on first hearing the good news and our zeal on first following God. Let us think frequently of all God has done for us. Let us obey the instruction God has given us, learn from the five wise virgins to be constantly wakeful and learn from the prophet Habbakuk, alert on the watchtower. Let us remember well the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gesthemane and his instruction to humankind in its darkest hour, when he said to the disciples, "Watch and pray always", and prepare our hearts. Let us take encouragement from Bishop Ting's remarks at the opening ceremony, when he urged us to "sincerely and wholeheartedly work to run the church well". In all our works, may we give glory to God and benefit people, fulfill the will of God, and be vessels to God's use.

Rev. Li Yonghong is a young pastor in Beijing. She is also a committee member of the TSPM.

Work Together with One Heart to Build Up the Body of Christ - Wenzao Han

Thanks to our Lord, who has been present with us throughout this Conference from start to finish, and has led us as we completed every item on our agenda.

The title of the work report of the previous Standing Committee was "Work together with one heart and build up the body of Christ," and was subtitled "run the church well according to the three-self principle." My understanding is that these are also the themes for this Sixth Conference.

As we gather together to give thanks to God for the successful culmination of the meeting, let us reflect together on what the Bible reveals about these themes. According to Paul in Colossians 1: 17-18, "Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the church is the body of Christ." This is one level of the spiritual meaning of the church. What then are the components of this body?

In the Bible, the word for the church in the original language comes from the root meaning `call'. It was used in the Old Testament to refer to gatherings of the Israelites. In the New Testament the body of the church is made up of people specially picked out by God. As 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." That is to say, the church is the gathering together of those who have been called by God. These people have experienced the grace of salvation, they have been redeemed from all iniquity and purified (Tit. 2:14), they belong to God and have become the body of Christ.

Since the church is Christ's body, made up of those chosen by God, it is different from ordinary social groups. It has Christ's Life within it, it is the extension of the incarnation, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is a product of the redemptive mission and work of Christ. It is built up in the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ to his apostles, that they should spread the gospel far and wide.

Infused with this desire to make the Lord's commission a reality, Chinese churches carried their unique sense of mission through the Cultural Revolution when they were closed for over a decade. Under the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as order was restored and with the assistance of the restoration of the government's policy of religious freedom, the church has undergone a wonderful revival in the last decade or so, "building up the body" once more with a new lease on life, and undergoing rapid development.

I remember someone asking me, during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution, what I thought about the future of the Chinese church. I said, "It's all in God's hands, but in my opinion the church will no longer have any visible form, it will be an invisible church."

The marvelous will of God is deep and unfathomable. Human beings cannot guess at it. Following the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese church was like a person recovering from a serious illness. At a time when so much had been destroyed, so many of God's servants buffeted by storms, wronged or even harmed, our hearts were moved by grace because God opened the gate for us once more, that we might begin anew to spread the gospel. Like the

disciples who first heard the call from Macedonia, we returned to the churches, responding to God's second call. It was especially the elderly pastors - those over seventy years of age - who, without regard for their age and physical weakness, gave themselves once again as living sacrifices to the second great period of service in their pastoral careers.

I remember a meeting in March 1980, the first time after the Cultural Revolution that Bishop Ting called together the elders of churches from all over the country. It was planned that the meeting would last seven days. Before the meeting, the plan was to spend half the time for people to pour out their sufferings from the Cultural Revolution. There was no indication during the meeting that people would be allowed to voice their grievances - nor was tiny indication given that they would not be allowed to. It turned out that during the entire seven days not one person voiced a single grievance. Instead the discussion focused on how to make up for lost time.

Pastor Peter Tsai (Cai Wenhao) wrote a poem during that meeting. The main idea was that no matter what a person's age, his or her heart remained young. We should act like young people, and shoulder the task of building up the church. As the meeting was nearing its end, Bishop Ting told those present about the plan to let people air their grievances, and how marvelous it was that no one had done so. This was due not to an absence of suffering during the Cultural Revolution, but to being touched by the same Holy Spirit. As it says in Isaiah 6: 8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, `whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, Here am I; send me!"

When many brothers and sisters received communion for the first time after the revival of the church, we were moved to tears when we received the bread and cup from the minister. No one asked which church you were from, or which denomination. We simply offered thanksgiving for the opening of the churches, for brothers and sisters able to gather together to worship God and share in fellowship.

Some believers were so touched on seeing the wooden plaque with the name of the church carved upon it hanging once more at the entrance, that they bent their faces to kiss the name carved there. Such moving forms of witness told us that believers who had been tested by passing through "the valley of the shadow of death", increased in love for God's Church and treasured its life of fellowship even more.

Over the centuries, the witness of the church in times of difficulty has shown us that the church's fundamental attraction and the strength of its bond do not depend on who the leader is, nor upon its organization, polity or rituals. Its attraction lies in the fact that the church is the body and Christ is its head. Believers are the members of this body and Christ the head. He links the members together, as Paul told the churches of Corinth, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body."

Paul used "the body and its members" as a parable for the relationship between the church and believers. In this way he is telling us that believers, as members, or limbs, are attached to the body, forming an indissoluble whole. The members' relationship to the body is a

relationship of life, like that of t branches to the grapevine. Neither can survive alone. This kind of union of life is the foundation of unity among the members.

Paul's parable not only illustrates the relationship between the church and believers, but also vividly shows that the relationship among members is that of being part of this life. Thus, the relationship of believers in the church differs fro contact among ordinary people in that it is the sharing and communication of this Life. This includes the relationship between co-workers in the church, between those who devote full-time and volunteers, the relationship among volunteers, the relationship between senior ministers and the younger coworkers, etc. In sum, the church is the loving fellowship in whit believers share with one another in the Holy Spirit. This another level of the spiritual meaning of the church.

Paul's parable of the members and the body deals with two different aspects of one principle. What is that principle? It the unity of the church, the unity of the body of Christ. The parable explains why, in the same church, different believes possess different gifts. Paul stresses in particular the important of sharing the work in cooperation with one another. Through these different gifts, God uses us, tells us to serve the church and build it up, to witness to the wholeness of the church. 1 Ephesians 4:12, Paul points out that God gave grace to a members of the body to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ." The measure c the full stature of Christ can not be fulfilled in any one person. Only in God's Church can there be fulfillment and the measure of the full stature of Christ shown. The final purpose of having different gifts is to make perfect the body of Christ.

To respond to the call of running the Chinese church well, we are willing not only to offer ourselves, but also not to overlook the role of other members of the body. Any member of the body cannot say to another, you are of no use, or only I am useful. In order to realize the body's full potential - as a church in society bearing witness to humankind, in order to fulfill the body - the church's mission to spread the Gospel, neither eyes nor lips, hands nor feet, can be dispensed with.

The Bible's teaching reveals to us that, on the one hand the Church is the Lord's body, it must be united; while on the other hand, there are many members in the body, each with their own roles. The unity of the whole, along with the diversity among members. This diversity within unity is characteristic of' tile "post-denominational" Chinese church today.

The Chinese church, like the Israelites thousands of years before, has before it a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, God guiding it out of the wilderness into Canaan. Yet our church is even more like the church of Ephesus in those days, with many things for which it can praise God, but with many problems at the same time, causing God and us to worry.

For the past decade and more, our church, led by the Holy Spirit, has borne excellent witness, witness filled with Christ's grace and which returns glory to God. There are many pastors in our church who work very hard with very few holidays. They have to preach two, three, or even more times every Sunday. This has become commonplace: there are over ten

million Christians in China, but only slightly more than a thousand pastors. That is to say that one pastor, on average, has ten thousand believers in his or her care. The hardships of pastoral work are self-evident. The salaries of some preachers are so low that they can't afford to get married or to support a family. Still they do not leave the pastorate or abandon the sheep. They work hard and are not upset by criticism. They are God's loyal stewards. If the apostle John were alive today, he would certainly say to them, "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance."

But there is another aspect. During the last ten or more years, the process of building up the church has exposed our weaknesses and deficiencies, especially in relationships between members. We have failed to train ourselves in bearing with one another in love, and "with patience, making every effort to maintain the bond of peace." Some people use their spiritual experience or their theological viewpoint to judge or even to disparage other members. They exclude or disallow the spiritual insights of other members. Others act not from a sense of what will benefit the whole church, but of what will benefit themselves or their clique, scrambling for power and profit, for fame, or to establish personal lower. They do not even hesitate to slander and belittle others.

The two national Christian bodies receive letters from all over the country every day. Quite a few are written to share their joy with us. They tell us of a new church established in their place, or that many yearning for the truth have been baptized, and so on. Some tell us of difficulties in their ministry. But in recent years, the number telling of disputes in the church which are damaging the name of Christ, have increased. An old saying goes, "Hardship is easy to share, but wealth is difficult." Today with the hardships of the Cultural Revolution behind us, we may be a few degrees richer in material terms, but dozens of degrees poorer in spiritual terms.

In the first six months of this year, the two national bodies held a working meeting, during which the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council, Mr. Liu Shuxiang, made this statement: "I hope that, though we are of different heart, we can work together." This means "We mustn't work against each other, but rather complement each other's efforts." This touched me deeply. These are sincere words by a leading cadre of the government who has a deep understanding of the situation of our church. Here God was speaking to us through Mr. Liu, giving us a reminder, encouraging and warning us.

It used to be that we were supposed to write "religious professional" on the line for "occupation" on personal data forms. This gave us a very bad feeling - we serve the church, how can that be termed "religious professional"! Now, however, I search my heart and ask: Are we, and this of course includes me, tending toward professionalism or even commercialism'? Are such tendencies growing or decreasing?

The Lord praised the church in Ephesus for its many strong points, but the Lord also reproached it. Its worst failing was that it had abandoned the love it had at first. This love God held to be most precious. The liveliness of the Word, the purity of love, the reliance upon God, the heart with which one dedicates oneself when one first believes. In abandoning all this, a person becomes secular, love turns into a pet phrase, nothing more than nice words with the

outer appearance of piety, but no true dedication, and this is a very dangerous situation. Even though the church in Ephesus had many unique strong points, the sad thing was that all these were no substitute for the love it had at first. This initial love is a pure and unconditional loyalty to God. The glory of the church in Ephesus is this love, a love which finds joy in serving God, a love which would sacrifice life itself. This is a quality no Christian can be without. How important is this initial love, so valued by God. No matter how hard we work, if we abandon our initial love, all our efforts are futile.

The Chinese church today is like the early church. Many who had never heard the gospel, first generation Christians, have entered the church in vast numbers in a very short time. This poses a great challenge to pastoral work and the work of building up the church. There is an invasion of heretical beliefs, such as the Yellers, the Established King sect, the Spirit Spirit sect, etc. If we do not take firm hold of the task of fostering the quality of believers' faith and thinking, they will be easily led astray.

To build up the church in China is a great project. We must join together with one heart, for the same goal exists in all our hearts. This task requires people with all sorts of gifts. We need those with the gift of management as well as those with the gift of' preaching, those with the gift of specialized service as well as volunteers, sisters as well as brothers - in fact, we need sisters even more. It is just like building a house; it takes carpenters, and bricklayers too. Not only those skilled in exterior construction, but those who know interior decoration. All sorts of skills and all sorts of gifts must be matched up. If not, if there is no cooperation, what is constructed will be of perishable straw, rather than of gold, silver and precious stones.

In all his pastoral letters, Paul's concern is not only for the spiritual growth of individual believers, but even more for the building up of the body of Christ. Again and again he encouraged close contact between members, each using their own gifts. We are all alike under the power of the Holy Spirit and guidance of God. Thus are we able to make the church in China, on the foundation of Christ as Lord, an even better witness, here in China and around the world.

The ministry before us is an arduous one. It requires pursuit and hard work by several generations together. It requires us to call forth once again the fervent aspiration of our first call to God's service, like John the Baptist paving the way for God.

Let us work together with one heart, placing our great task of building up the church before God, placing the future path of the Chinese church before the Lord's throne, and praying together for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Closing sermon of the Sixth National Christian Conference.
Translated by Gail V. Coulson and Janice Wickeri.

Closing Address - Luo Guanzong

Bishop Ting and other elders, leaders, delegates, and friends,

We thank God for guiding our nearly 300 Christian delegates from all around the country in holding this Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference here in our capitol, Beijing. This has been a distinguished gathering during which Chinese Christianity has summed up past experience, and looked forward to the future and the new century.

Our Conference began on December 29 with an opening ceremony in which Bishop Ting in his congratulatory remarks expressed the fervent hopes the older generation places upon us. In his address, the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council (RAB), Mr. Ye Xiaowen, reflected the trust and support of the Party and government for Christian circles. In the Work Report read by my colleague Dr. Wenzao Han, representing the Standing Committee of the Fifth TSPM and the Standing Committee of the Third CCC, we heard a review, in the spirit of seeking truth from facts, of the achievements and problems in our work over the past five years. With the summing up of experience as the foundation, the chief substance of "running the church well according to the three-self principle" was given as follows: We must maintain our independence and initiative, practice love of country and love of church, strive to increase unity. and strive to implement the "three wells". These points have been further summarized as the "four musts". Guided by this thinking linked to present conditions, the report put forward ten tasks involved in running the church well. After a lively discussion and deliberation, the Work Report was accepted. The Conference also revised the Constitutions of the TSPM and CCC; elected 185 members; and passed a resolution endorsing the "Resolution of the Central Committee on Important Issues in Strengthening Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization". Here the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference has completed its duties. Looking back over the course of the meeting, I can say that this has been a meeting which has made full use of democracy, strengthened unity, summed up experience, clarified direction, strengthened confidence and run the church well. Many of us delegates have been greatly encouraged by our attendance at this meeting.

Now I would like to discuss a few of the more prominent issues of this Conference.

Significant development in awareness of running the church well according to the three-self principle.

In China, due to historical experience and present needs, upholding of the three-self principle and running the church well have always been inseparable. During this Conference, we have become even more deeply aware of this. The Resolution of the Fifth National Chinese Christian Conference clarified that in its development to the present, the TSPM had entered upon running the church well according to the three-self principle and that the three-self principle must be thoroughly implemented in every aspect of running the church well. The present Work Report of the Standing Committees again points out: ". . . if we do not persist in the three-self principle there is a real danger of losing our direction on the way toward building up the church." Only "if the three-self principle is closely linked with the church's ministry can the church bear the fruit of healthy development." All this serves to show that in

China, upholding the three-self principle and running the church well are joined by a close and indissoluble link.

Because in the past we did not concretize "running the church well according to the three-self principle", some coworkers and fellow believers felt it was an empty phrase. Many co-workers went about carrying it out according to their individual understandings. After several years of efforts by co-workers, the current Work Report has gathered its main contents into four "musts", and delegates across the board have reflected that this is very helpful. [n fact, these four points are not simply the discovery of one person or even of a small minority. They are both a summing up of forty years' experience of the TSPM and of practical experience in building up three-self and the church.

At the time of its inception, the main task of the TSPM was to end imperialist domination and realize the "independence" of Chinese Christianity, proclaim support of new China and express the clear-cut stand of Chinese Christianity as loving the country and loving the church. To carry out this duty, Three-Self from the beginning appealed for "strengthening unity", strengthening mutual respect in matters of faith; carrying out self-government, self-support and self-propagation; all this was in order to achieve the goal of a church run by Chinese Christians ourselves. As things developed, some of the original tasks were completed, but, faced with new circumstances, what is involved in the four "musts" has further developed and the fundamental principle has not changed.

In recent years, under the guiding thought of running the church well according to the three-self principle, many co-workers and fellow believers have actually, to different degrees, been working according to these four "musts". Wherever these have been carried out fairly well, the church's work has gone rather smoothly and the foundation has been strengthened; wherever these have not been adequately carried out, the internal problems and contradictions in the church have increased, and in different places some things have offended the three-self principle.

In the discussions, many delegates have given this Work Report high marks, feeling that it summed up experience, seized on what was vital, and clarified the guiding thought and concrete tasks for running the church well; it was felt that the Work Report resolved the large issues: whether or not three-self should be upheld and how; whether the church should be run well and how. Some delegates also felt that the report was both sharply focused and persuasive; both thoroughly practical and forward-looking; both adapted to current trends and close to brothers' and sisters' hearts. There were also delegates who felt that it provided a blueprint which would carry Chinese Christianity into the next century and strengthened confidence and resolve to run the church well.

We also need to point out that this Work Report was in process over an entire year, and underwent numerous discussions and drafts. The present report gathers together the wisdom of many co-workers, and is a product of a process which has made full use of democracy. Thus everyone is quite satisfied with it.

What we must pay attention to now is how to make the guiding orientation of the "three-sell principle" and the practical content of "running the church well" blend together well. The four "musts" are not an empty slogan but demand that we responsible co-workers at all levels have a clear awareness in our thinking as we undertake our actual work in the church, and regularly ask ourselves whether the work we are doing is in line with these principles. Christianity must adapt to a socialist society and to a very large extent this depends upon whether we do things according to the four "musts".

We must pay attention to developing Christian morality and ethics

Bishop Ting's assertion in his remarks to the Conference that Christianity must lay more emphasis on ethics and morality evoked a lively response from the delegates.

We just unanimously passed the "Resolution Endorsing the Resolution of the Central Committee on Important Issues in Strengthening Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization" and this resolution points out: "Christianity is a religion rich in moral and ethical elements and we should strive to fully develop those positive factors in Christian doctrine and order which have a bearing on ethics and morality, in order to serve socialist society and the people." Christian morality and socialist morality have many points in common and we can make our own contribution to the construction of socialist spiritual civilization completely in line with the teachings of the Bible. This is both a demand made on us by our faith and a hope laid on us by the people. In this respect we must also pay attention to overcoming arrogant and complacent thinking, such as that by which some think Christians need not stress the building up of socialist spiritual civilization, or that Christian morality and ethics are loftier than others and so on. In fact, throughout Christianity there still exist to varying degrees, uncivilized and negative phenomena: some do not stress promotion of ethics and morality; or service to the people or to society; some unconsciously have brought superstitious practices into the church; some have placed religious faith in opposition to scientific progress. And there is a market within the church for the evil thinking of money worship and individualism.

We must safeguard and strengthen unity

Bishop Ting and Mr. Ye of the RAB have exhorted us to safeguard and strengthen unity. The delegates have had many views on this, and I would like to add my own.

In his address, Mr. Ye stated "We must fully attend to guarding the stability of the social and political environment and eliminate all factors which might lead to instability." To safeguard stability in the area of religion, we must achieve good unity between Christians and the people as a whole and achieve a good unity within the church. And unity within the church is also the foundation for doing the work of the church well. We must look at this question from the height of the glory of the Lord's name along with the demands of the Chinese people.

In order to achieve the safeguarding and strengthening of unity, I believe:

1) We must improve our spiritual nurture. Love is the nucleus of Christian ethics. Jesus said: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35). Love . . . "does not insist on its own way; . . . it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It hears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (I Cor. 13:5-7). Especially in matters touching upon individual name, position, power and benefit, we cannot but uphold the biblical truth, be the salt and the light; this is the test of reality.

2) If we want unity, we must make full use of democracy. One of the important points here is that we must conduct the business of the church according to the Church Order. Doing things in this way makes it easy to put questions before the meeting for common discussion, to hear a wide variety of views, and to draw on the collective wisdom, which is beneficial to developing the zeal of believers and evangelists for co-administration of the church and mutual supervision, so that some problems can be solved in their early stages, avoiding arbitrary action by an individual or a minority who want to make the church their sphere of influence, leading to problems intensifying and becoming very difficult to solve. Sometimes it is difficult to reach a consensus on certain problems and these can be temporarily set aside, but it is not good for people to pursue their Own solutions and even less can we let contradictions sharpen.

3) We must distinguish truth from falsehood and deal appropriately with inner contradictions. In the case of persons or events that are clearly wrong, we must investigate thoroughly to clarify the nature and degree of the error, and apply the necessary sanctions according to the Church Order. In the course of carrying this out, we must maintain the spirit of doing good to others and do all we can to help. We must ponder the appropriate methods to apply, that we can cure the patient through admonishments and reach our goal of furthering unity.

4) If we want to have an all-round grasp of the spirit of religious freedom, we ourselves must thoroughly carry out the policy of religious freedom. We all cherish our own religious faith but we must in the same way respect others' freedom not to believe or to adhere to a different faith. As a citizen's political right, freedom has always been bounded by non-interference with another's freedom. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you" (Mt. 7:12). In the pulpit we can spread our most precious doctrines of Life and salvation, but it is not good to accuse, ridicule or curse others. Imagine if others treated us this way, how would we feel`? Within Christianity itself there are different understandings of the Bible, different theological views and different worship practices, which we can only meet with mutual love and mutual respect. If we want others to respect us, we must first respect others. In the past there were cases within the Chinese church of mutual attacks; these should be eradicated and not allowed to recur.

5) We must be on the alert against harmful activities by hostile forces from overseas. General Secretary Jiang Zemin has warned us: "International hostile forces have made ethnic and religious questions the breach by which they seek to 'westernize' and 'split' our socialist nation. This deserves our attention and vigilance." One of the tricks of activities aimed at infiltration by hostile overseas forces is to spread rumors and lies among us and to sow discord

in a desire to see the world plunged into chaos. Their plot is to split us and destroy our unity. We must increase our vigilance on these matters.

The transition from old to young must he developed well

Among the delegates and elected members at this Conference, there has been a marked increase in the number who are middle-aged and young. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Bishop Ting's proposal and the fostering of successors by the older generation, for the future of the Chinese church. We begin from consultation and election of delegates through voluntary resignation, to the selection of middle-aged and young people to take up their responsibility as delegates. The average age of the 299 delegates at this Conference is 52.6 years, a drop of 6.4 years from the average age in 1991; the average age of the 185 who were elected committee members is 54.8 years, a drop of 7.6 years in the average of members in 1992. This shows that there are successors to serve our Chinese church, and that the age gap has been greatly reduced.

On behalf of the newly-elected committee members, let me now express our gratitude for the trust all of you have placed in us. Guarding against pride and impetuosity, we will strive wholeheartedly to do our work well. I sincerely ask you all to keep us constantly in your prayers, hold us firm; I also sincerely ask the older generation to continue their care and support for us, that we may become good and faithful servants, not merely taking up space or failing to bear fruit.

In the course of our discussion, many delegates brought up a great many requests for the two national Christian bodies. We thank our co-workers and fellow believers for their confidence in us. We will work hard, according to the four musts and ten tasks put forward in the Work Report, and with the support, help and oversight of co-workers and fellow believers, we will expedite putting these into practice. At the same time, we must explain that the powers of the two bodies are limited. In a country as vast as China, in a church made up of millions of believers, running the church well requires fully bringing into play the action of the Christian Councils at the provincial, autonomous region and municipality levels as well as of Christian Councils and responsible co-workers at all levels, and realizing the potential of Church Affairs Committees at the grassroots. At present, we have many weak links and a great many difficulties. We sincerely hope that each delegate leaving this Conference will bring its spirit back to those co-workers in his care and to the sisters and brothers, especially the responsible co-workers in the Christian Councils and churches at all levels, that they will form study groups on the four "musts" and ten tasks for "running the church well according to the three-self principle" which came out of the Conference, that they will increase awareness and get in touch with actual conditions in their area to decide how best to implement these things. As for the call that "A good Christian should be a good citizen", we should enable all Christians to come to a consensus and we should go further, and practice what we preach. Only in this way can the important fruits of this Conference become a common action of all Christians in China. Only by relying on God's power and might, can the Christian Councils and churches everywhere strive together on this basis and the Chinese church become steadily more well run.

Bishop Ting and the older generation have not stinted their efforts and have even been present here to guide us and for this we give them our heartfelt gratitude. We also want to express our thanks to the workers and staff of' the Conference and the hotel who have worked day and night for our convenience both during and outside meetings, ensuring that the Conference would be a success.

Delegates, under the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party with Comrade Jiang Zemin as core leadership, our country is striding on a road of prosperity. The twenty-first century approaches. This will be the century in which our great enterprise of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics attains its glorious achievement. Through this meeting, our direction and duty in constructing a church adapted to our great socialist homeland is clear. We wait only for all of you to unite our co-workers and fellow believers with a clear-cut stand to strive to run the church even better according to the three-self principle.

May God watch over you as you return to your homes, and may you bear beautiful witness to the Lord in your workplaces.

Thank you.

Mr. t.uo Guanzong is the newly-elected Chair of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (TSPM). He delivered this closing address to the Conference on 2 January 1997.

Beyond the Conference

Hermeneutics in the Chinese Church - Ji Tai

Though Christianity's entry into China can be traced back a thousand and more years to the Tang dynasty, it did not truly take root there until a hundred or so years ago. If we consider the "standard translation" - the Union Version - the Protestant translation of the Bible into Chinese has a history of no more than eighty years. From a scholarly viewpoint, in comparison with the West, biblical research in China has only just begun. Previously, commentaries have mostly been translations and introductions of Western works. Recent years have seen the appearance of some original work drawing on the Western foundation. If we turn to the life of faith of the church over the course of a long period of evangelism and pastoral work, however, we see that the form of biblical understanding and interpretation in the Chinese church has gradually taken on definite special features. These are the important components of theology in the Chinese church.

This essay will attempt to provide a preliminary description and critique of these features and to form some opinions on the course of future developments.

Understanding of the Bible

Before I begin my examination of the special features of hermeneutics in the Chinese church, I would like to take a look at the way in which most people in that church approach the Bible. For the principles and methods by which an individual or a church interpret the Bible are determined by their basic attitude to scripture. What kind of book or books is the Bible after all? This sort of topic may be pretty old hat in the West, but in China more and more people are taking it up.

1. The Bible is "inspired" by God

"All scripture is inspired by God" (2Tim 3: 16). This is a common article of faith accepted by nearly all Christians, but the meaning given to "inspiration" is a case of everyone according to his or her own lights. Since the majority of Chinese Christians hold to a traditional evangelical faith, "inspiration" has been understood in terms of dictation, recording every jot and tittle, which is to say that the majority (especially older Christians) still hold to "the doctrine of inspiration". And what is more, a large number of people believe in the inerrancy of the written word, even in translation. Perhaps we can call this type of understanding a "broad doctrine of inspiration". I have recently been involved in the work of revising the translation of the Bible and regularly receive letters from Christians who question or disagree with this or that word or punctuation in the new edition. These reflect the feelings of many people that "not one jot or tittle of the Bible (read Union Version) may be changed".

Another approach may be termed a narrow "doctrine of inspiration". Jia Yuming translated the Western term `Dictation Theory' as the "theory by which both the linguistic and spiritual meaning of language is revealed", which he affirmed and explained as follows: "This is not to say that the Bible has been copied over and again or translated and retranslated without the

least error, every word accounted for, but means that the original words of the Bible are all inspired and absolutely inerrant."[1] This type of understanding is still representative of' the view of the Bible held by many evangelists and believers.

The Protestant approach has always been to see the Bible as the highest authority. Our Chinese tradition of respect for the classics adds another important factor in shaping an extremely fundamentalist view of scripture. Rev. Jia quoted Confucius to emphasize the importance of the Bible's language: "A single word can prosper a nation, a single word destroy it."[2] Furthermore, most Christians, including some evangelists, are ignorant of the original languages of the Bible and its transmission history, a situation which has contributed to "inspiration theory" being accorded a dominant position.

Along with increasing access to a number of Bible editions and the continual growth of knowledge of the Bible, there is a gradual shift from a broad "inspiration theory" to a narrow "inspiration theory". Furthermore, while it is affirmed that "the Bible is God's word written down by people through the prompting of God's spirit,"[3] attention is turning to "the formation of the Bible as a text, a process which includes both God's revelation and human participation. Humans are finite, incomplete beings. Where humans are involved it is difficult to avoid inadequacies."[4] From this it can be seen that people are moving from an understanding that the Bible is "literally inspired by God" to one which sees the Bible as "in essence inspired by God".

2. The Bible as "scientific" truth

In today's world, with the spread of education and rapid technological development, the question naturally arises: What is the relationship between the Bible and science? This question takes on special importance for our youth, who have received from primary school to university an education that is scientific and atheist. In this age where science reigns supreme, people are fond of asking: "Is the Bible scientific?" The response of most Christians is that the Bible is in accord with science. For example, a pamphlet very popular among Christians says that Isaiah 40:22 - "It is he (God) who sits above the circle of the earth" - shows that 2500 years ago, God had revealed the true shape of the earth to humankind through the mouths of the prophets.'[5] Many sermons dwell with relish on the fact that this or that great scientist is a Christian and believes in the Bible, as proof that there is no conflict between science and scripture.

The minority of scholars who are more highly educated do not of course applaud using such methods to arrive at "scientific proofs". In fact, T.C. Chao (Zhao Zichen) long ago sought to separate the Bible and science in order to eliminate such "misunderstandings". He felt that

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[1] Jia Yuming, *Shen dao rue,* Lingxiu Academy, 1949. pp. 177-179
[2] Ibid.
[3] Jiang Peifen, *Arise and Go With Me.* Nanjing: Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, 1988, pp. 77.
[4] Gao Yuzong, *Mission of Eternal Life,* Beijing: Yanjing Theological Seminary, 1993, pp. 323-324.
[5] You Feng, *Know the Truth, p. 136.*

the reason for the conflict between the two was "due to the fact that religion mistakenly treated the Bible as science, thus obliterating true science . . . with the result that scientists treated the Bible as a scientific text, but gave up on reading the first chapter of Genesis, saying, this is not science and there's no reason to continue to believe it. For example, to say that the claim that infinite chaos could be done away with in seven days is irrefutable is ridiculous, isn't it'?"[6] Because most of those who held this view were the more liberal "modernists" - people whose views were quite removed from those of the masses of ordinary Christians who held to the "inspiration theory" - it was clearly an idea which could not be accepted or understood by most people.

It should be noted that the relative nature and limitations of science have seldom been mentioned in this discussion. Most people have little awareness of the fact that in saying "The Bible is in accord with science" they do not uphold the authority of the Bible, or that this diminishes the Bible's status. Perhaps this is because most people see only the advantages science and technology have brought to humankind, and have not yet noticed the concomitant problems and crises it has produced in contemporary culture. As modernization progresses, the reflection on human civilization and "scientific truth" that comes with it will cause Chinese Christians to go a step further in their knowledge of biblical truth.

3. The Bible is a whole

Generally speaking, Westerners are fond of research that involves careful and detailed analysis and this holds true for their research and interpretation of the Bible as well. While studying in Germany, I heard a professor admonish students: "There is no such thing as a theology of the Bible, nor can you make sweeping statements about "what the Bible says . . ." Thus, one can say that doing critical biblical study (or "bible criticism") in the West relies on the native skill of the exegete.

Yet exegetes in the Chinese church are more likely to understand the Bible as a whole. Most evangelists in the Chinese church see no conflict between the rather dissimilar accounts of creation found in the first and second chapters of Genesis. One exegete put it this way: "The first account is sequential, the second by topic; the first is a wide angle bird's eye view, the second a close-up shot."[7] Exegetes do no find the varying accounts of Jesus' miracle of the loaves and fishes in the gospels an obstacle either. They feel it "all has to do with loaves and fishes" and "everything is related and forms an organic whole".[8]

This sort of understanding of the Bible as a unified entity is shaped first of all by the Asian tendency to think wholistically, integrating parts into the whole. Secondly, it is of course related to the special characteristics of the faith of the majority of Christians in the Chinese church. So even those who have been trained in Western theology can find in a comparison of Genesis and Revelation that "the Bible has its own internal system".[9]

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[6] T.C. Chao, *Christian Philosophy.* Chinese Christian Literature Society, pp. 78-79.
[7]7Yi Ming in *Collected Sermons,* no. 34 (1996), pp. 104.
[8] Gao, pp. 4.
[9] K.H. Ting, *How to Stud the Bible,* Shanghai: Chinese Christian Council, 1983, p. 5.

Bible interpretation

With this basic understanding of the Chinese church's approach to the Bible, we can proceed with our look at the special features of Bible interpretation in that church. In terms of transmission and development, the Chinese church is heir to the traditions of the Reformation and the early church on the one hand; while on the other, it needs to respond to today's rapidly changing society.

1. The aim of interpretation

The Chinese church has known tribulations; today it is in an era of revival and rebuilding. We do not yet have a group of experts well versed in the biblical languages and solidly grounded in scholarship, so we lack the qualifications for large-scale exegetical undertakings. Ever since the revival of the church in the early 1980s, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary has compiled the periodical *Correspondence Course*, which often carries serialized commentaries on the books of the Bible. Most of these, however, are not the result of scholarly research, but rather are interpretations of the religious and ethical significance of the text and insights from Bible reading. These commentaries are meant as spiritual training for the mass of lay volunteers in the church. For example: In a commentary on Colossians, one writer passes over the concept of ranks in heaven in Chapter I verse 16 - ". . . all things in heaven . . . whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers" - emphasizing instead that all things "have been created through him and for him".[10] Another example: not long ago the Chinese Christian Bible publication committee compiled an "Annotated Bible" (NT) but did not provide lists of sources or enumerate various interpretations of the text in its annotations. It too has as its main aim to provide spiritual training for believers and not merely information.

Another important hermeneutical goal in the Chinese church is to allow God's word to show forth its light in our age. In the matter of how to interpret the practical significance of the biblical text, what exegetes have received appears to be quite varied.

In the 1950s, with the recently established new China before them, some people compared socialism with the beautiful vision of the Bible, and felt that "not only does building socialism not go against the spirit of the Bible, but it is right in line with it."[11] Today too there are those who attempt to put forward other views than the usual traditional Chinese Christian mindset of absolute opposition between God and the world, belief and unbelief, the word of God and the word of man (sic), and who offer new explanations of related Bible passages, who point out that these are relative in order to adapt to the national situation of stability and unity.[12] Others have a new interpretation of Ecclesiastes' "All is vanity", feeling that this is a sigh wrenched from Solomon after leaving God and living a life of corruption

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[10] Han Bide, *A New Commentary on the Captivity Epistles,* Nanjing: Nanjing Union Theological Seminary 1991, p. 3.
[11] Chen Shuqian, "Christians and Reality," in *Nanjing Theological Review,* no. 6 (1957).
[12] Pan Jinggao, "Looking at Three Questions through the Experiences of the Prophets." *Collected .Sermons.* no. 6 (1983), p. 109.

and unbounded avarice. They urge Christians today to live active lives of service out of love for God and others.[13]

Another interpretation, a response to the varied forms of evil in today's society, points out that this sin-stained era is just like "Noah's times" and that we should rush to urge people into the "ark" - the church.[14] There are also some who, in interpreting the significance of the "temple of the Spirit" and the "priestly kingdom", point out that the church should not be equated with a secular nation, and any sort of "order" or "head" are cursed by God.[15]

As exegetes in the Chinese church respond to the times, although a minority have some politicized inclinations, the majority act out of an ethical concern for society. In addition, there are those who base an interpretation of natural and social phenomena in the present world on the escatological texts of the gospels and the apocalyptic literature. For example, Wu Mujia feels that Revelation speaks directly to an age threatened by rampant hegemonism and nuclear destruction.[16]

2. Hermeneutical methods

Though Chinese Christians hold differing views of the Bible and the times, in terms of hermeneutical method, they have more in common than not. The most traditional as well as the most popular exegetical method in the church is the "spiritual interpretation".

What most people mean by this in most situations is the allegorical method. Examples can be found everywhere. Some people follow a late exegete in giving an allegorical explanation of the three precious metals found over the beautiful gate of the temple: copper means judgment, silver means atonement and gold means glory.[17] And there are those who are extremely original in their interpretation of the "spiritual meaning" of the different types of blemish mentioned in Chapter 21 of Leviticus: a mutilated nose (The NRSV reads 'face') means one's prayers 'don't get through', a limb too long indicates a busybody, etc.[18]

I have done some analysis of the reasons for the popularity of the allegorical method of biblical interpretation. The first possibility is that this method has a special affinity for our culture-, the second that evangelists in the Chinese church do not have enough grounding in the history and terminology of hermeneutics.[19] People within the church have already put

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[13] Shi Shouling, "The Meaning of 'All is vanity' ", *Collected Sermons,* no. 5 11983). p. 109.
[14] Jing Jiuwei, "Builder of the Ark, the Just Man Noah," *Collected Sermons,* no. 28 (1994), pp. 74-80.
[15] Sun Hanshu. "Thoughts on the Doctrines and Lessons of First Peter," *Collected Sermons,* no. 32 (1995), pp. 111-117.
[16] Wu Mujia, A *Commentary on Revelation,* Nanjing: Chinese Christian Commission on Theological Education, 1994, p. 2.
[17] Qi Qingcai, "Spiritual Lessons of the Gate of Beauty," *Collected Sermons,* no. 2 (198 I), pp. 29-30.
[18] Gao, p. 309.
[19] Ji Tai. "Preaching in the Church in China;" *Nanjing Theological Review,* no. 26 (1996), p. 10. English translation in *Chinese Theological Review: /I:/* (1996), pp 21-30.

forward different views of this type of "spiritual interpretation", on the basis that the "spiritual meaning" and the "allegorical meaning" should be separate. Su Deci states: "The so-called spiritual interpretation follows the spiritual import and lesson of the text, so that both the interpreter and the hearer may receive spiritual help. The spiritual meaning is not at all the same as the allegorical meaning.[20] As knowledge of the languages and literature of the Bible and understanding of the history and geography increases, the trend in hermeneutical methods will be more reasonable, sure and comprehensive.

I have given a preliminary description of the special features of biblical exegesis in the Chinese church. We find that these are basically features of traditional evagelicalism. At the same time with continuing social development and daily growth of the church these too will move gradually from conservatism to openness. Yet the Bible is the word of God, a unity with Christ at its center, the highest standard for Christian life. And these constitute the faith of the Chinese church.

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Reprinted from *The Role and Interpretation of the Bible in the Life of the Church in China.* Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong, 1997 for Lutheran World Federation, pp. 3.

[20] Su Deci, *Primer ot Biblical Research,* Nanjing: Chinese Christian Commission on Theological Education, 1993, 2nd ed., p. 118.

Honor the Lord as Head; Serve with Diligence - Su Deci

Text: Col. I: 17-20

The word "church" appears only twice in the Four Gospels, yet in the other twenty-three books of the New Testament, it appears over one hundred times. The news of the church and further information on it are concentrated in the epistles of St. Paul The passage just read deals with the church's relationship with God the Father, with Christ and with all things, stressing that Christ is the head of the body, the church. Being members of the church in China, a church in the process of construction, it is necessary for us to be guided by the biblical message revealed to us by the Lord.

Why is Christ the head of the body, the church? We learn from the passage that there are four main reasons, which are as follows:

The Bible tells us that, in God's creation, the world is centered on human beings. So in this world, the relationship between God and humans becomes essential to that between God and all things. Although the world as created by God in accordance with his plan was affected by the fall of humankind, the perfect plan of God cannot be changed in any way. The function of God's redeeming grace in Christ is to maintain and perfect the creation. This is also an essential function of the church. So the Lord of Creation is the head of the church with reason

Second, "he is the firstborn from the dead." "For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1Cor. 15: 21-22). The resurrection of Christ not only indicates triumph over the power of death and hell, the truth of his incarnation, but also the fact that he is the second Adam, the new one as different from the old or first Adam, and that he is the beginning of the new humanity possessed of eternal life, and the beginning of the church. This is a special manifestation of Christ's victorious power.

Third, "for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." The resurrection of Christ manifests his divine nature as well as his human nature. He has the power and nature of God in the fullest. The church as ransomed by Christ is the symbol of humankind's renewal by God. It is God's new creation. So it is the church's responsibility to help believers take off the old self and clothe themselves with the new self, to put the flesh to death and live as Christ did. Only when the church is connected to Christ, the head of the church, who has in him all the fullness of God the Father, can this responsibility be carried out. The ultimate concern of the church is, as we find in Ephesians I: 10, to "gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

Fourth, "and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." The strained relationship between God and humankind is due to the trespasses of the first Adam. The reconciliation between the two is brought about through the blood of the second Adam's cross. Reconciliation between God and humankind is a motif found throughout the whole Bible. Christ is the only way of reconciliation, hence Christ the Savior. The reconciling power of

Christ is by no means limited to the God-humankind relationship. It reaches out to all things, whether on earth or in heaven. Christ is the head of' all things, in this the cosmic aspect of his nature is made clear. He is therefore the head of the church.

I have shown above that Christ is the head of the church. This concept can also be useful in our thinking on soteriology, Christology, and ecclesiology. I would like to make three points in this regard.

First, in the economy of God, salvation is the means by which the goal of salvation may be reached.

Second, the Christ who comes into our lives is the cosmic Christ. He spreads his love to the whole universe.

Third, the reason for the church's existence lies in her subordination to God, her connection to Christ her head, and the nurturing of the new humanity as required by God.

The passage we have been studying is limited in scope, yet the topics it covers are of real significance for the church in China today. For one thing, we hear of and see occurrences in which salvation has been given inappropriate preeminence due to a failure to understand salvation from the standpoint of God's eternal plan. In practical terms, this denigrates the omniscience of God and the power of Christ, and relegates pastoral work and the functions of the church to an inferior position. For another, if the cosmic nature of Christ is eclipsed or ignored in favor of the personal experience of belonging to Christ, this will lead to a very utilitarian view of Christ, which is very detrimental. May the Holy Spirit continue to inspire us, teach us and enable us to understand the integrity of the church better, so that in the course of building up the church, we can walk on the path of the Lord and have favor with the Lord and with all the people.

As we gather together here today, we are grateful for God's grace over the last five years, for the success of the Sixth National Christian Conference and the smooth transition of leadership. We thank our Heavenly Father for his guidance, that the church in China has progressed in gospel propagation and self-construction. Praise and glory be to the Lord!

At this time, we rejoice in what Bishop Ting and other church leaders of the elder generation have done for the growth of the church. Fifteen years ago, as the Chair and President of the two national Christian bodies, Bishop Ting took on responsibility from the Lord to rebuild and renew the church in China. He worked on a comprehensive blueprint for the church in China. In 1980, he began to call for the church to be well governed, well supported, and for propagation to be well carried out, thus enriching the three-self principle. When people seemed to care only for externals - like church buildings - he often made known his prophetic views on church administration, theological education, personnel training, publication, the church-state relationship, the social witness of the church, overseas relationships, and so on, leading us in making timely decisions. Fifteen years have passed, and by the grace of God, a burgeoning church has emerged from an arduous journey.

During the Sixth National Christian Conference, Bishop Ting expressed two hopes: "the first, that we be united; the second, that we stress ethics and morality." These golden words will be enshrined in our hearts.

Dear brothers and sisters, in retrospect, we cannot but marvel at the greatness of God's grace. Nevertheless, the future awaits us with equal promise of greatness, and equal responsibility. The "four musts" and "ten tasks" that were requested of us at the National Christian Conference need to be put into practice. Let us be united in Christ, doing his work with diligence and relying upon the grace of God. Let us establish ourselves in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, so that our limited strength will be transformed into tremendous power and our service in unity accepted by the Lord.

We need prayers, friendship and communication with overseas brothers and sisters. In the universal body of Christ, we can uphold one another.

May the Lord be with Bishop Ting and other church leaders of the elder generation, grant them good health, good spirits and longevity. Although they have retired from positions of leadership, we believe they can make new contributions to the church in China

May the Lord be with all of you. Amen.

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This sermon was delivered at a **service of thanksgiving for the leadership of the** elder generation and of Bishop K.H. Ting in particular and for the transition to the new leadership in the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China, Shanghai Community Church, I 5 March 1997.
Translated by Wu Enyang.

To Unite All in Christ, That We May Become One - Chen Zemin

Text: Eph. 1 : 90-10; 4: 13

Last week we experienced a very delightful and helpful Global Mission Conference.' The focus of the conference this year was on the church in China. The planning committee had very aptly and thoughtfully chosen Ephesians for the Bible study sessions, and I was honored to cover chapter two of the epistle, sharing with you our experience in Bible study in China. I began my preparation by first studying the epistle in Chinese, and then comparing this with several English versions, aided by various commentaries. I used the Chinese Union Version of 1919, which has been accepted as the "standard" version used by almost all Chinese Christians, not just in China, but also in other parts of the world. As I read, one expression, consisting of four Chinese characters and which appears twice in this epistle, stood out. The translators of the Chinese Bible in 1919 chose this phrase to express the idea of "[all] returning into one" in a way that would be easy for every reader to understand. It contains an allusion to one of the traditional Chinese Confucian tenets jC 1` [p7 (universal harmony), first recorded in the *Book of Rites* (ca. 300 BCE), and reiterated and developed by the reformist-scholar Kang Youwei in his *Book of Great Harmony*

1 Global Mission Conference of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), held at Montreat, GA, July, 1996.

(1897), and then by Dr. Sun Yatsen, founder of the Republic of China, in 1924. I have been pondering this theme of "coming into one" as a theological theme in Bible study. By comparing with various English versions, I noticed that this particular Chinese expression, found only in the Epistle to the Ephesians, is used to convey two different aspects or dimensions of "unity" in the Pauline teaching on the mission of the church.

The first occurrence of this Chinese phrase is in 1: 10, where it is used to translate the Greek *ananakephalaiothasthai.* This is an infinitive meaning "to sum up", as in arithmetic or in rhetoric. In the English Bible it is translated in a number of ways: "to gather into one" (AV), "to unite" (RSV), "to gather up" (NRSV). In the Anchor Bible, Markus Barth suggests another translation: "to be comprehended under one head" (vol. 34, p. 89). I still find it hard to comprehend. Many exegetes think it is difficult to bring out the full force of this verb in translation. About one thousand eight hundred years ago, Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 180-c. 200) elaborated this verse theologically and developed a "theory of recapitulation" (from *capitulatio,* which is a literal Latin translation), imbuing this difficult word with rich christological and soteriological contents. It comprises both the restoration of fallen humanity to communion with God (reconciliation) and the consummation and completion of the entire salvation history, until according to God's good pleasure and plan, in the fullness of time, all the creation, including things in heaven and things on earth, are "summed up in unity with Christ as the head." Perhaps this is what Teilhard de Chardin calls the Omega Point! This is how some Christians in China, including those we call "culture Christians," have been trying to understand the expression in this passage. I propose to translate it more literally in Chinese as (to return to the one head). Two different words in Chinese, both pronounced *yuanshou,* may be used. The first means the chief head; the second, the original head. These are compatible and both are suitable translations for *anakephalaiothasthai.*

Understood in this way, it helps us, tiny and mean and ignorant as we are, to see somehow that there is a meaning and a purpose in the whole universe and in the history of humankind, and that ultimately we are to be summed up and subsumed under the head. To take the whole divine cosmic unfolding of creation, redemption, sanctification and final consummation as according to the wise counsel and plan of God gives meaning to our own lives. There is a divine telos, an end and purpose, in the whole universe, and that we all have a part to play in the fulfiling of this final end in Christ, who gives value to our lives. "In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance" (v.11). It gives us a sense of respons bility, honor and hope. Although our lives are short and trivial, we will be gathered up into One in Christ, cosmologically and eschatologically.

This same phrase appears again in 4:13 in a different context, and refers to a unity of a different order, but is closely connected with the previous one. It is about the unity of the church. According to the theology of Ephesians, the divine melodrama described in the first two chapters is to be unfolded and realized in Christ and embodied in the Church. This is continued and developed in the following chapters (3-6). One American writer has explicated this theme through four theses: (1) the mission of the church as God's mission; (2) the church as the goal of mission; (3) the church as the instrument of mission; and (4) the eschatological fulfilment of the mission.

[2]**Edin U. Roels, God's** *Mission - the Epistle to the Ephesians in Mission Perspective,* **Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.**

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As the final fulfilment of the mission or the plan of God is to "gather all things into one", the church, as the goal and instrument of mission, must also be one.

From the Apostolic Age in the first century the church had begun to "split," not just as a result of geographical dispersion, but unfortunately through doctrinal and practical or constitutional differences. Soon cultural and socio-political factors entered in and intensified and aggravated the divisions. It is a scandal that now the *Church Universal* (which means "the one whole church") is divided into an increasing number of churches, denominations, sects, cults, etc., in defiance of the biblical commandment that the church should become one. In the Intercessory Prayer Christ prays "that they may all be one" (Jn. 17: 20-21), and Paul in this epistle repeatedly admonishes us to become one. The English translation of 3: 6 reads "the Gentiles have become *fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise* in Christ Jesus through the gospel." The Chinese version brings out the force of the original Greek' by thrice repeating the adverb r] *(tong),* meaning "together" or "the same": "n **3T pul ; rri]** ~- ; R V P „V" . In 4: 3-6, the idea of oneness is more emphatically spelled out by repeating the character --(yi), meaning "one" eight ti mes:"qVuF7~- - It is in this context that in 4: 13 the second li¯**i]qj~tJ:**¨ (come to the unity) is used to sum up "the gifts given to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

[3]**A paronomasia in the Greek:** *synkleronoma, synsoma, synmetocha.* **Moffat translates: "co-heirs, companions, and co-partners."**

[4]**Markus Barth observes that in verses 4-6 the number "one" is used seven times, and the word "all" occurs four times (Anchor Bible, vol. 34A, p. 463).**

This is not the time to go into the past history of the divided churches in China, and how we have been striving to achieve unity through the present so-called "post-denominational stage". Many foreign visitors and observers have expressed, in guarded tones and perhaps with some misgivings, their sympathy, appreciation and even admiration for the preliminary and experimental steps we are taking towards church unity. I must be frank and say that we have by far not yet come to the unity as taught by Christ and Paul in the Bible. Ours is a precarious situation. We are aware of the difficulties and testing challenges facing us. This is how the texts I have taken this morning from Ephesians are being read and studied by Christians in China, as illumination, inspiration, admonition, warning and challenge. May God bless and guide us, and help us in our common prayer that we will be coming into one. Amen.

Rev. **Chen Zemin has recently retired as Vice-Principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.**

English original.

"Be Holy, For I Am Holy" - Li Yading

Text: Acts 5:1-11; 1 Peter 1:15-17

When the Bible speaks of the nature of God, of God's people, or of the character of Christians, the words which recur most often are "holy" or "clean", which appear no less than 300 times in all in the Old and New Testaments. To be holy means to be as noble and undefiled, as pure, without spot or blemish, as God. This kind of holiness cannot be nurtured of one's own accord, it does not depend on one's own merits, but is a natural outflowing of the inner life of the spirit.

Since humankind's sin and fall, people lost the purity they had at first. Human nature was sullied by selfishness, pride and envy, which led many who were thus defiled to no longer be able to face God, and a gap opened between God and humankind. This gap, this thing which distanced humanity from God, which separated them, is sin. But God loves humankind, he seeks humans out; he possesses grace and compassion, and long ago when the Israelites rebelled against him and would not believe, he said to them, ". . . you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex. 19: 6). In Old Testament times, if humanity wanted to be reconciled to God, the only method to be followed was to offer a sacrifice. A sacrifice required a priest and before a priest could offer a sacrifice, he had to purify himself - only then could he enter the holy of holies. In Genesis and Leviticus, among the regulations governing priests offering sacrifices, there are many which have to do with the priest being clean. Why should this be'? Because God said, "For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for 1 am holy" (Lev. 11: 44). One who is not sanctified cannot look upon the face of God.

The Old Testament prefigures the New. In the New Testament, those who belong to God, who are blessed, loved, and called, are the spiritual Israelite people. The Lord Jesus is our great Priest, he made for us the eternal sacrifice. Through his precious blood, we gained holiness that we might come before the face of God confidently and without fear, that we might sit face to face and share and talk with God - this is God's grace (for us). Because the Lord's body was broken for us and then the curtain of the temple rent for us, enables us, because of faith in Christ, to become priests also, and relying on the precious blood of Jesus, to gain entry to the holy of holies. For if we are priests of God, we must be holy. The apostle Peter wants us to be "a holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2: 5), Paul mentions many times "Greet one another with a holy kiss". In Colossians, Paul says: "As God's chosen ones, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" (Col. 3: 12).

The church is God's holy kingdom and so the church should be holy and undefiled. From the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, we can see how holy the early church was, it could not accommodate even a little uncleanness, not even the slightest wound; at the same time we also see how strict is the judgement of God, how direct and swift.

Ananias and Sapphira were not punished because they refused to make a donation, indeed they handed over a portion of their gain. Nor was it because their offering was imperfect, because whether one gave much or little was up to the individual. The reason they died was because they misrepresented the portion they gave as the whole - their offering was not

sincere. This is the sin of the hypocrite, not only was it a lie, but a deception of the Holy Spirit, and to deceive the Holy Spirit is to deceive God. So the apostle Peter said: "How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart'? You did not lie to us but to God!" From the account in the gospel we see that what makes Jesus angriest and leads him to speak the severest curse is the sin of hypocrisy. Jesus calls it a "whitewashed tomb", "inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth" (see Mt. 23: 17). The God we believe in, who said: "I am the truth", makes no compromise with lies or deception.

This type of sin, which defiles holiness, which replaces love with selfishness, has the result of replacing the life of the spirit with the treasures of this earth. For if one should gain the whole world, but lose one's own life, of what benefit is that'?

From this we see the holiness of the early church. In those days the church was entirely and absolutely under the power of the Holy Spirit. The road to the Tree of Life was guarded by a sword of flame. That holy might was like a blaring flame. If a human passing by, in heart or action, bore the least stain of falsehood or deceit, that one would certainly be attacked and destroyed. Therefore this insincere offering, this deception, became a sin unto death. Peter at that time was entirely under the control of the Holy Spirit, nothing escaped his notice, his speech was terrifying. This stern judgment was not of humankind, but was an act of God. It was the initiative of God to cleanse the church. He wanted to make the o God's way of discipline. Perhaps someone will ask: Why was this form of God's discipline not continued'? Our reply is that if the church could be under the control of the Holy Spirit, if it could maintain the holiness and unity it should have, then the discipline would have continued. The sad thing is that in terms of discipline the church now is increasingly weaker and the main reason for this is that there are adulterated, defiled and unclean things in the church.

The effect and disturbance Ananias' and Sapphira's end had on the church of the time is clear: "And great fear seized the whole church and all who heard of these things" (Acts 5: 11). Through the facts about Ananias and Sapphira, the Holy Spirit took direct action to teach Christians about the holiness of God; and the church was profoundly awed by this sense of cleansing. Where the indwelling and fullness of the Holy Spirit is, there is reverence. The church of that time was marked not only by mutual love and sharing of property, but was so clean that not a single falsehood could be tolerated.

The ending of this incident brought not only fear, but, even more, power. The apostles performed many miracles of God in Solomon's Portico, to the extent that in Jerusalem and the cities all around, the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits were all cured. (Acts 5: 16).

This passage of Scripture begins with destruction, but ends with healing, and is a manifestation of God's might in these two circumstances. Hell and heaven exist at the same time. The Holy Spirit first exacts his judgement in the church and then exercises his healing power and when the church has been cleansed, she becomes the instrument of the Spirit's healing. A cleansed church is a powerful church, a church filled with the Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is flows without end, like what the Lord called "living water". But if the church becomes secularized, as defiled as the world, then evil will block thehas become

unclean. Why is it that today the outside world no longer holds the church in awe? Why do some churches fail to an influence or force in society? Because the church allows unclean things to enter in, because the church has become unclean. May God's church continue to maintain the cleanness brought by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that her life may be called a flame guarding the door to the church, that no lie or filth may enter.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira can also be adapted to the individual case. A holy person must be a person of strength; a holy person must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Those who have been called saints in the history of the church have been holy priests of God in the times in which they lived. It is precisely because of the might produced by their holiness that they were enabled to become mainstays of the church and the church was enabled to stand firm amid storms, even to be victorious over its enemies and cause the powerful bow down.

Ambrose is a father of the ancient church. He was the Bishop of Milan. At the end of the fourth century, the Roman Emperor Theodosius massacred many people at Thessalonika. When the Emperor returned to Milan, and wanted to enter the church to receive communion, Ambrose refused to permit it, and absolutely refused to let him enter the church door. He said firmly to the Emperor: "I demand your repentance. You certainly remember how King David repented of his sins. Can you be embarrassed to do what King David did'? Unless you are stricken with grief and humble your soul before God, your sins cannot be forgiven you. No angel or archangel can save you, only the power of God can save you, but he saves only those who are contrite and repent. How can you lift your eyes to God's temple" how can your feet stand before it? How can your hands stained with innocent blood be raised in prayer? How can such hands receive the body of Christ'? Get thee hence. Do not add sin to sin, but repent your sins, seek forgiveness and revive your soul." Finally, Ambrose made this Emperor take off his crown and join the line of ordinary believers awaiting confession, kneel down, weep and confess.

From these incidents we can see that the leaders of the church in those days, and the church itself, had great power. Where did this power come from? The most important point is that it cane from holiness, holiness brought power. If we could count all the fathers of the church and people of great spiritual gifts in the history of the church, which of them was not pious and holy'? The holiness of a church leader brings holiness to the whole church. When the whole church is made holy, then no one can block its power. We can also see what a terrible sin unholiness was in the eyes of the early church and what a strict record the church kept of it! Is it any wonder then, that the church of those times, though it was caught up in inner struggles and outside plots and surrounded by enemies, not only was not corrupted, or destroyed, but won out over its enemies, raised high Jesus Christ, and flourished even more? Turning to look at some Christians today, some churches who for money, for fame, or to satisfy their own selfish desires, treat unclean things as commonplace, cause so much terrible defilement in the church, how sad this is. What power can such churches or such people have how can they expect signs from God?

For us - today's Christians and theological students - this message is no less than an alarm, it also brings us a revelation and a challenge. How should we situate ourselves in our times, in today's society and today's church? Do we have the power to meet the situation we find

ourselves in today? Everywhere in society at present there is opposition to corruption. Again and again we hear: oppose corruption, promote cleanness. Why'? Because corruption can lead to the dissolution of a nation, it can make hearts grow feeble and indifferent, and cause people to lose hope. Throughout society, people long for incorruptibility. What is incorruptibility'? It is freedom from corruption, it is cleanness. We Christians and theological students not only must be clean and free from corruption, we must also be holy, because holiness is the source of our strength. We would do well to ponder ourselves for a moment, why does our unity lack cohesion? Why are people's hearts rather indifferent'? Why have we no attraction for those who do not yet believe in the Lord'? Why is it so easy for Satan to enter in'? 1 think the biggest reason is that we are far from being holy enough. There is still a great deal of defilement and uncleanness among us, lies and deceit, actions which benefit ourselves while harming others, envy and competition and so many things that are unpleasing to Cod. "And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold" (Mt. 24: 12). It is precisely all these many unclean things which most easily lead people to impiety: it is precisely these many foul things which give Satan an opening: and it is precisely these many unholy things which make us and our unity lose strength, just as when Samson lost his hair. If we want to recover our strength, only one thing is necessary, we must first recover our holiness; the first thing we must do is allow our figurative hair, cut off by sin, to grow out again. That is to say, we must allow our hearts of service, fouled by sin, to recover their purity, and not to be defiled again. A person with a holy life has strength. If everyone can he holy, a collective strength will be produced. So no matter in what environment we find ourselves, we must be sure to maIntaIn our own holiness. We can say that holiness is the secret to strength.

Peter warns us: "Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, `You shall be holy, for I am holy.' If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile" (1Pet. 1: 15-17). And Paul wants us to "in every place . . . pray, lifting up holy hands" (I Tim. 2: 8). God frequently reminds us: "[the Father of spirits] disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness . . . . Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12: 10, 14).

The life of holiness is a life of reverence for God, of piety, and a life of reverence for God and piety will make us even more holy.

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