

Volume 21

Chinese Theological Review:21



edited by Janice Wickeri

© Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia
All rights reserved. Published 2008.
Printed in the United States of America

ISSN 0896 – 7660

Cover Calligraphy: Xu Rulei
Cover Design: Lois Cole

The Chinese Theological Review is a publication of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia

Editorial and subscription:	Publisher:
Janice Wickeri, Editor	Dr. H.S. Wilson
Chinese Theological Review c/o SFTS 105 Seminary Road San Anselmo, CA 94960 USA ct.review@sbcglobal.net Back issues available.	Executive Director, FTESEA KACES Campus Balmatta Mangalore-575 001 INDIA ftewilson@gmail.com

CHINESE THEOLOGICAL REVIEW 21**CONTENTS**

From the Editor	v
Our Contribution to a Harmonious Society K.H. TING	1
Run the Church Well according to the Three-Self Principle; Play an Active Role in Building a Harmonious Society CAO SHENGJIE	5
China Christian Council: Sixth Standing Committee	34
Three-Self Patriotic Committee of Protestant Churches in China	35
CCC/TSPM Advisory Committee	36
Church Order of Protestant Churches in China	37
Proposal for Christians' Contribution to the Economic Development of Society	52
Resolution on Support for the 2008 Beijing Olympics	54
This, too, is Christianity QIU ZHONGHUI	55

Salvation as Reconciliation	62
CHEN YONGTAO	
What Kind of Christianity Do We Hope For?	94
WANG ZUO'AN	
Face History Honestly; Strive to Open up the Future	102
JI JIANHONG	
Learn from History to Run the Church Well	105
CAO SHENGJIE	
<i>Nanjing Theological Review 2006</i>	126
INDEX	

From the Editor

This issue of the *Chinese Theological Review* features articles from the recently held 8th Joint National Conference of the Standing Committees of the China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China (hereafter CCC/TSPM) which met in Beijing in January, 2008. Since its first issue in 1985, the *Chinese Theological Review* has published translations of most of the important speeches, statements etc., from the National Christian Conferences, beginning with the 4th session (*CTR*: 1986). This provides a convenient way for readers to trace developments in the Chinese Church through these important years

Delegates from across China came together for the conference, which is convened every five years. A new CCC/TSPM leadership was also elected, with 16 national leaders heading an 84 member Joint Standing Committee. Continuing recent trends, the average age of the 16 new leaders at top levels in the CCC/TSPM is 50. Both committees have representation from Christians all across the China mainland; a total of 181 representatives were elected to the new conference.

The Rev. Gao Feng is the new President of the CCC. Rev. Gao was born in 1962, holds an M.Th. and is a Ph.D. candidate. He serves as Chair and President of the Shandong Provincial CCC/

TSPM and as Principal of Shandong Provincial Seminary. He is a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and of the Standing Committee of the Shandong People's Political Consultative Conference. He is a past Vice-President of the CCC.

The newly-elected Chairperson of the TSPM is Elder Fu Xianwei, born in 1944 in Shanghai. Elder Fu is a university graduate, a graduate of the Pastor's Course at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, and an ordained elder. He is the Chair of the Shanghai TSPM and a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. He has also been Associate General Secretary of the national TSPM.

Names of other members and officers of the two Standing Committees, as well as those of the Advisory Committee can be found on pages 34-36 of this issue. Further details on the all the leadership can be found on the Amity News Service website www.amitynewsservice.org.

This issue of the *Chinese Theological Review* contains the "Work Report," "Church Order" and other documents and speeches from the Conference.

A major document adopted this year is the "Church Order of Protestant Churches in China," (p. 37) which has undergone substantial revisions from its introduction at the 5th National Conference in 1991 (translation in *CTR*: 1991) as the order for trial use and its adoption at the 6th National Conference in 1996 (*CTR*: 12). The Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie, outgoing President of the CCC, has written a commentary on the revision process which appears in *Tian Feng* (No. 3, March, 2008). She describes the new "Church Order" as having greater clarity and organization than earlier versions. Issues surrounding church management of property and finances as well as the need for an organized and elected group of representatives from among the congregation, which also functions to give more Christians an opportunity for service in the

church, are set out in greater detail.

She also draws attention to the ongoing emphasis on strengthening the institutional structure of the church and the greater clarity in regulations as a response to both increased government and public awareness of the positive role of religion in the public and social life of the nation and efforts on both sides to “bring religion into legal channels.” The latter refers to the civic and patriotic duties of religion on the one hand, and the recourse to the law in pursuit of the lawful rights and interests of religious believers and groups on the other. The theme of the positive role of religion appears again and again in the contents of this issue and more will be said of this below.

A noteworthy addition to this revised order is Chapter Two, “Faith.” Since the introduction of unified worship in the late 1950s and the post-denominational approach to inherited differences in matters of faith and liturgical practice has been characterized as “seeking the common ground while reserving differences,” and “mutual respect in matters of faith.” Thus, as Cao observes, the chapter on faith in the revised order does not attempt an exhaustive definition, but emphasizes tenets of basic and common faith.

She notes that this chapter was discussed at a meeting which included discussions with professors from Nanjing Seminary and representatives from provincial, autonomous region and municipality level Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations nationwide. Staff also held some 200 consultations to hear the views of Christians from a variety of faith backgrounds. The extended discussion of the meaning and nature of faith given in this chapter also serves, she writes, to counteract some misunderstandings of the Chinese Church overseas, such as “the church in China believes in Three-Self, not in Christ,” or “the Chinese Church denies that Christ is the Head of the Church.”

An abridged translation or summary of Cao’s commentary on the “Church Order” will appear in a future issue of *Amity News Service*.

The major theme of the “Work Report” from the Conference, also presented by Rev. Cao, is neatly summarized in its title, “Run the Church Well according to Run the Church Well according to the Three-Self Principle; Play an Active Role in Building a Harmonious Society.” The discussion of the achievements of the previous CCC/TSPM session and of the existing issues and challenges which lie ahead for the new session are set in this framework. The government’s policy emphasis on building a “harmonious society” was broached at the 16th Party Congress and further elucidated at the most recent 17th Party Congress held in October, 2007, which emphasized “building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.” In 2001, the government’s National Religious Work Conference and “Regulations on Religious Work” further emphasized doing a good job of overseeing and managing relations with religions and religious believers, stressing understanding and the use of legal channels.

The CCC/TSPM work report mentions institutional and ecclesial strengthening of the church and its adoption of the “Licensing Criteria for Chinese Christian Clergy” as responses from the church side to the positive signals from official government bodies. (p. 16) In addition, Chinese President Hu Jintao gave an important speech at a Collective Study Session of the Politburo in which he emphasized the positive role for religions in achieving the national goals of a harmonious and well off society. Christians, then, have a positive role to play in nation building, which is a “new expectation in society,” and something that had “not existed in the past.” (p. 16)

Theological reconstruction is part of this role: “building the harmonious society is becoming an important part of reflection on theological construction,” (p. 10) and “an awareness that Christians bear a social duty continues to strengthen; rules and regulations of the church have improved and young and middle-aged colleagues are moving into leadership positions.” (p. 17)

The higher social profile of Christianity and of the Protestant churches is further reflected in the speech given at the Conference by Mr. Qiu Zhonghui, General Secretary of The Amity Foundation. Amity, one of the oldest charitable organizations (founded 1985) and NGOs in China, has always had as its goal making the Christian presence more widely known.

Qiu, too, sees the emphasis on the harmonious society as providing greater space for Christianity to become an accepted part of society and something which dovetails with Amity's own goals and vision: "Amity's social service work has brought us to the personal understanding that endeavors of compassion are an indispensable component of building a harmonious society." (p. 61)

Other items from the conference include greetings from Bishop K.H. Ting, as well as a proposal and a resolution that reflect the church's response to its role and responsibilities in the larger society

Also in this issue, Mr. Chen Yongtao offers a theological consideration of Christian values which could be said to lie at the heart of a Christian concept of harmony, though his discussion is concerned with an even more basic matter of Christian faith, the concept of salvation. In the spirit of theological reconstruction, he explores what he feels are outdated and over-Westernized views of salvation held by many Chinese Christians, views which often make it difficult for non-Christians in China to accept the faith. "We must make a new interpretation of . . . theological ideas that are out of sync with our present society. . . . in our present context, it is extremely important to bring some new understandings to bear on the nature of salvation." (p. 90-91)

He goes on to introduce the view of salvation as reconciliation and restoration of relationship: between human beings and God; among persons; with creation. This is a relational approach, stem-

ming from the relational nature of our triune God. Because Chinese society values relationship and integration, Chen feels that this is a gospel message that can be heard and accepted by more Chinese people.

The final three articles are taken from the opening ceremonies of a church-sponsored conference: “The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church,” held in 2007 under the sponsorship of the TSPM/CCC, to mark the 200th anniversary of Morrison’s arrival in China, as well as to recall both the contributions and shortcomings of the Western missionary movement and the long road to selfhood for Christianity in China which resulted. The themes of a positive and more active role for Christianity and the continuing importance of the three-self principle and independence of the Chinese Church are stressed in the opening remarks by Mr. Wang Zuo’an, Deputy Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Presbyterian Ji Jianhong, outgoing chair of the TSPM brings his greetings and encouragement to conference participants. Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie’s longer paper considers the strengths and weaknesses of the missionary movement in China, the damage and challenges it brought to the cause of Christianity there and the prospects as Christians take up their role in building the harmonious society.

I am grateful to the authors of these essays. Any errors in representing their work are entirely my own. Thanks are due Philip Wickeri for consulting on the contents of volume 21, and for his editorial assistance. I would also like to thank the Rev. Kan Baoping, new General Secretary of the CCC, for providing materials from the recent National Christian Conference for translation.

The various levels of church bodies and offices are referred to as CCC or TSPM with appropriate regional modifiers (local/

regional, etc.) or (at the national level) CCC/TSPM. Biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV, unless another version has been used in an original English piece. Personal names are given in the Chinese manner, family name first, except for persons who commonly use another form, such as Y.T. Wu, K.H. Ting or Wenzao Han.

I would also thank Dr. H.S. Wilson, executive director, and the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, publishers of the Chinese Theological Review, and all those responsible for producing this issue at the KACES Campus in Balmatta, Mangalore, India.

Janice Wickeri
San Anselmo