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China Church Meeting Elects New General Secretary, Discusses Problems of Local Congregations

A lay person, Dr. Wenzao Han, was elected acting general secretary of the China Christian Council (CCC) at the annual meeting of the Standing Committees of the CCC and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Committee of the Protestant Churches of China (TSPM). The meeting, held in Beijing from November 22-26 under the overall theme of "Maintain Independence, Run The Church Well" was attended by delegates from Christian Councils all over China as well as observers from different CCC committees.

In his keynote speech [see documentation in this issue], Bishop K.H. Ting, president of the China Christian Council admonished the delegates not to give up principles of self-administration, self-support, and self-propagation. Ting said that some church workers thought that these principles were a thing of the past, just good enough "as slogans or decorations" and did not need to be implemented. Ting spoke critically of local church leaders who had, without the knowledge of the provincial or national church leadership, asked for financial help from abroad for their church work. Citing the case of Northeastern Theological Seminary in Shenyang where funding offered by a Korean church had so many conditions attached that the seminary rightly turned it down, Ting said that true friends of the Chinese church abroad did not want the CCC to go back on the Three-Self principle.

Talking about "running the church well", Ting pointed out that the church needed to be built up well on the local level. According to the many letters of complaint from local Christians received by the CCC, while many local churches seemed to be well organized, quite a few appeared to be mismanaged. Ting stressed that all churches should be run in a democratic way. "Our church today must do things by consultation, only through consultation can problems be solved."

Small group discussions during the meeting centered on the problems of local churches, with special stress on financial management.

An important item on the meeting's agenda was the election of an acting CCC general secretary to replace Bishop Shen Yifan who died suddenly in August. Dr. Wenzao Han will serve until a new general secretary is elected by the National Christian Conference in 1996. Additionally, several younger persons were elected to various different leadership positions. Rev. Bao Jiayuan was named associate general secretary of the CCC, joining Rev. Shen Cheng'en and Rev. Su Dece who were elected in 1992; and Ms. Jing Wei was elected associate secretary general of the TSPM, joining Rev. Bao Jiayuan and Rev. Xu Minghan who have been serving since 1992. Finally, several younger people were named secretaries of CCC committees.

[OVER]
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Speaking to ANS after the meeting, Han said that as acting CCC general secretary he had two priorities for the next two years: Bringing up a new generation of Christian leaders and making a more concerted effort to serve the rural churches in China. As far as the rejuvenation of the church leadership was concerned, the meeting had achieved a first step. "There are now several younger people in positions where they can gain experience, and I hope that they will be elected into leadership positions at the next National Christian Conference," Han said. [ANS]

ANS 94.6.2

"Preaching Bands" Travel Fujian Countryside, Teach And Preach

Three "preaching bands" organized by the Fujian Christian Council traveled thousands of kilometers in August to preach to and visit Christians in eight different counties.

One band which traveled to the north of the province, reported that in Shouning County there were more than 3,000 Christians worshipping in about 40 meeting points, but without a single church worker serving them. Not surprisingly, members of the Shouter sect from Zhejiang Province who had been active in the area had created a lot of confusion among the Christians there. The band also reported that a county Christian Council had been established in Shouning, but had no office space, and that the only church building in the county was still privately occupied. The band therefore visited the county Religious Affairs Bureau and United Front office, expressing their hope that the church building would be returned as soon as possible.

Another band visited Xuepu county where about 25,000 Christians worship in 135 meeting points. In the county, there are three pastors and five evangelists, as well as more than 200 lay workers. The band held a three-day revival meeting in the county which was so well received and attended that band members spent extra time preaching.

In Bingnan County, the third band helped teach a lay training class and preached in various places. [ANS]

ANS 94.6.3

Ordinations

Twenty-three church workers were ordained pastors, elders or teachers in Jiangxi Province between June and August this year. Ten graduates from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, three of them women, were ordained pastors in Hebei Province. [ANS]
Chinese Church Leader Calls For End To Bible Smuggling

Rev. Bao Jiayuan, the newly elected associate general secretary of the China Christian Council (CCC), has called for an end to the smuggling of Bibles into China. Speaking to ANS in Hongkong on his return from a visit to Europe, Bao said that the printing and distribution of Bibles within China was a much more effective way to meet the needs of Christian believers. "To receive Bibles smuggled into the country is against the law. Why should Chinese Christians risk their freedom for a foreign Bible when Bibles are legally available within China?" Bao asked.

Bao told ANS that the Amity Printing Press in Nanjing hoped to print at least 2.5 million Bibles in 1995, among them tens of thousands of Study Bibles. With the installation of a new Timson printing press in July 1995, Bible printing capacity could eventually reach 4 million copies a year. "There is still a very great need for Bibles in China," Bao stressed, "but we are doing what we can to get Bibles to all believers, whether they have relations with the CCC or not. Bao added that the large majority of Bibles printed in 1994 had been distributed to rural meeting points.

Commenting on the claims of several "China Ministries" that tens of thousands of Bibles needed to be smuggled to China every month to meet demand, Bao mentioned the case of a meeting point leader in Anhui Province who had recently received an unsolicited shipment of 1,000 Bibles by mail. "He [the meeting point leader] had no idea how his address had become known abroad. He had not asked for any Bibles, and he was very afraid that the police might find out about this shipment and close down his meeting point." Bao pointed out that whichever group sent the Bibles had not helped but rather endangered a meeting point that had no intention of breaking the law.

Bao noted that in another case, also in Anhui Province, police had confiscated several hundred Bibles. After the CCC protested to the Anhui Religious Affairs Bureau, the Bibles were returned. "This was only possible because these Bibles had been printed by the Amity Press. They carry a book number and are legal; therefore the police had no right to confiscate them. If smuggled Bibles are confiscated, there is nothing we can do," Bao said. He added that local cadres in the countryside often had little knowledge of Christianity, and that finding smuggled Bibles in a meeting point would strengthen their false impression that Christianity is an instrument of foreign organizations. If Christian groups received smuggled Bibles, they therefore did not only endanger themselves, but also other groups who had not broken the law.

When asked how Christians abroad could help to get Bibles to believers in China, Bao said that donations to Amity, the United Bible Societies or to the CCC's revolving fund for Bible distribution were the most effective ways. To help meet the need for more Bibles, the CCC has for years been cooperating with organizations and churches from outside China. According [OVER]
to Bao, the United Bible Societies still pay for the paper on which the Bibles are printed, thereby subsidizing each Bible by about US$ 2.

"We can sell the Bibles for about 9 RMB, even though it costs more than 25 RMB to print them," said Bao. Several other organizations and churches have helped the CCC to set up a revolving fund to aid in Bible distribution. As churches and meeting point can not usually pay in advance for the shipment of Bibles, this fund, which currently contains about 2.5 million RMB, has helped speed up the distribution of Bibles especially to poorer, rural areas, Bao said.

Describing how the CCC worked with organizations from abroad, Bao quoted the example of East Gate Ministries International (EGMI), an organization that had formerly smuggled Bibles into China. In 1992, EGMI signed an agreement with the CCC to finance the printing and distribution of 1.1 million Bibles within five years. Many of these Bibles were going to meeting points that had been in contact with EGMI but had no previous relations with the CCC. Bao said that the CCC was open to making similar agreements with any organization that was willing to work within the limits of Chinese law. "Please stop endangering Chinese Christians," Bao pleaded, "and let us work together to help them instead." [ANS]

ANS 94.6.5

Anhui Churches Rebuilt After Floods, New Ones Added

Yingshang County in northwestern Anhui Province has more than 40,000 Christians who meet in dozens of churches and hundreds of meeting points. During the devastating floods in the summer of 1991, 16 church buildings or meeting points were completely destroyed and 39 were badly damaged.

With funds released by the China Christian Council and money donated by local Christians, rebuilding work started almost immediately after the floods had receded. Christians all over the county gave their time to work on building sites, and donated building materials and lent tractors as well as other machinery. By the end of 1994, not only had all the damaged buildings been restored, but almost a hundred new meeting points and churches had been constructed, among them five church buildings that seat more than 1,000. [ANS]
Wenzao Han Committed to Helping Gangwashi Church Work Out a Peaceful Solution

Dr. Wenzao Han, recently named as acting general secretary of the China Christian Council, told ANS during a visit in Hongkong that he was concerned about reports of recent disagreements in Gangwashi Church in Beijing. "We at the national Christian Council believe that all internal church conflicts should be worked out in the spirit and letter of the church constitution," said Han. He was committed, he said, to sitting down with members of Gangwashi church and the Beijing Christian Council and working out a solution that would satisfy all involved. Han was visiting church leaders in Hongkong after attending the Second European Ecumenical China Conference in London and visiting the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

Difficulties at Gangwashi Church arose after the Beijing Christian Council announced the appointment of Rev. Yu Xinli as a replacement for Rev. Yang Yudong. The seventy-three year-old senior pastor was reluctant to relinquish his position. A number of supporters of Rev. Yang rejected the appointment and appealed to the China Christian Council for assistance. Efforts made by the CCC to encourage both parties to resolve the problems in a spirit of reconciliation fell through when the church broke out in turmoil before the Sunday service on Dec. 4, after members of the BCC announced the formation of a new church committee.

Han noted that coverage of events at Gangwashi Church by the overseas press has added confusion to an already difficult situation, and that there have been many "unfounded or exaggerated reports." Citing an example of an overseas news release which reported that Rev. Yang was put under house arrest during the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to China in October, Han commented that he himself could testify this was not the case: "A member of the Archbishop's group, Rev. Bob Whyte, and myself met with Yang after he finished leading a Bible class in his church. The media, in its eagerness to get a certain angle on a story, doesn't always verify the facts. But what an unfortunate and detrimental mistake to make, to say that Rev. Yang was under house arrest."

Han commented that he and other members of the China Christian Council saw as a positive step Beijing Christian Council's decision to retire Rev. Yang as senior pastor. He noted that it was part of an effort by the Beijing Christian Council, as well as church councils nationwide, to bring a younger generation into leading positions and to relieve the older pastors of their workload. While the older pastors are being asked to give up their administrative responsibilities, they can still play a role in the life of the church, contribute to pastoral care and preach sermons. "There are four churches in Beijing proper. In all of the churches, the senior pastors have been asked to step down," said Han, adding that most were happy to see younger pastors in leadership roles, as well as to reduce their own responsibilities. "The replacements do not mean the sacking of the former senior pastors. They only [OVER]
Gangwashi Church.../2

signify the strengthening of church leadership," said Han.

"Problems in the church happen everywhere in the world, and have happened all through the 2000 years of the church's history," said Han. "We have our own set of problems in China, and we need prayers from Christians both inside and outside China to give us the strength and wisdom to deal with them." [ANS]

Church-Run Store Sets Example

A tea shop run by the church in Weifang City, Shandong Province, has been cited by the national church monthly Tianfeng as an example of how churches can raise income and at the same time give a Christian witness in society.

The shop, named the "Three-Self Tea Company," has raised more than 200,000 RMB for the church since it was set up in 1983. The money was used to augment church workers' salaries as well as to purchase two small cars which enable church workers to do more effective pastoral work in the many small villages which surround Weifang.

The shop, which is managed by three retired Christians with a business background, has not just been an instrument to raise money for the church. Income could have been much higher if cigarettes and alcoholic beverages had been sold along with tea, but church members refused to consider selling merchandise that they felt was harmful to the health of others. Instead, the shop is seen by the church members as a means to make Christianity more visible within the city. It is therefore stressed that all workers in the shop are Christians, and half-hour devotions are held every morning before business begins. [ANS]

"Christianity And Modernization: An International Academic Consultation"

The first consultation ever to be held in China on the theme of Christianity and Modernization took place in Beijing from October 10 - 14, 1994. Sponsored by the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing) and the Amity Foundation (Nanjing), the consultation brought together fifty scholars from around the world, representing ten different countries and regions in Asia, Western Europe and North America. Overseas participants mainly consisted of Christian scholars and ecumenical staff persons, whereas Chinese participants were mostly academic researchers from social science academies and universities, with the exception of four from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.

The consultation was an occasion for the exchange of ideas and scholarly views on Christianity as a social and [OVER]
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cultural phenomenon and its relationship to modernization. Papers from a wide variety of disciplines were organized around six major themes: Christianity and East-West Cultural Exchange; Christianity and National Cultures; Christianity and Modern Science; Christianity and Economic Development; Modernization's Challenge to Christianity; Christianity and Post-Modernism.

Several papers dealt with the role of Christianity in the context of China's modernization program, the effects of which have many searching for human values and a spiritual path to give meaning to life. A number of papers by Chinese participants dealt with love, friendship and transcendence as important cultural contributions from the Bible and the Christian tradition. Some papers also focused on the contemporary Chinese Church, and the interest which many young people have in Christianity.

Chinese Christian participants spoke of the challenge which modernization poses to a church with a poorly educated laity, an inadequate number of pastors and an underdeveloped theology. In contrast, many of the papers from overseas participants raised questions about the ways in which ideologies of modernization (and its economic counterpart, the globalization of the market economy) undercut both Christian and human values.

Probably the most significant aspect of the consultation was that it involved participation and support from the Chinese government, academics, Chinese Christians and the international Christian community. Five years ago, such a conference could never have been held, and the very fact that it was illustrates the changes which have taken place in "opening and reform" with respect to the academic study of religion in China. In the final plenary session, all participants who spoke emphasized the importance of such occasions for international and interdisciplinary sharing, especially in formal and informal discussions, and of their hope for future international consultations on similar themes. [ANS]

News In Brief

"Light Of The World Day Care Center," run by Taiping Church in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province, was opened in 1990 with 70 children. As enrolment grew to 130 children in 1993 and many applicants for places had to be turned away, three more churches in the city have now opened their own day care centers.

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Every day, at least one new church or meeting point building is opened somewhere in China. Among those recently completed are a small church near Kucha on the Silk Road in Xinjiang, a 600 square metre church mainly financed by donations from Taiwan returnees in Yongding, Fujian, as well as two renovated private houses now used as churches in Ulan Hot, Inner Mongolia. [ANS]
With Independence And Initiative, Run The Church Well
Opening remarks at the fourth joint meeting of the current standing committees of the CCC and TSPM

K.H. Ting

My topic today is: "with independence and initiative, run the church well". I stress this for two reasons: firstly, our Three-Self Patriotic Movement, to which we have adhered for several decades, acting independently and running the church ourselves, is now under threat; and secondly because though we talk about running the church well, at present, this is mostly talk and relatively little action.

1. Independence and Initiative.

I have recently returned from a three-week visit to the United States, where I attended two meetings at which the participants were all people who had been missionaries in China before Liberation or just after. One meeting was sponsored by the Presbyterian Church, and the other by the Methodist Church. There were about 150 to 160 people there at least -- some already in their eighties or nineties, the majority around seventy years of age, along with their children. We know that in international Christian circles, there are two attitudes toward China: hostile and friendly. The people at these meetings generally belonged to the latter category. They had not forgotten their Chinese over the course of the last forty years and they often missed China; some had even been to visit. Their enthusiasm for China was high and they were exceedingly pleased to have the opportunity to be part of such a meeting. At these meetings, I introduced them to the changes which had taken place in China and in the Chinese church in the forty years since their departure, and they listened avidly. What they admired most was the Chinese church's independence and self-government, because they had thought that once the missionaries left in the early post-Liberation days, the Chinese church would be finished. It hadn't occurred to them that our Chinese church could flourish without missionaries. They all expressed great admiration. Friends, please don't imagine that all former missionaries to China are anti-three-self. Not only were the former China missionaries at these two meetings not anti-three-self, today they all praise self-administration, self-support and self-propagation.

But in China today, among some of our colleagues within the Chinese church, there is an opinion which feels that independence, self-administration, self-support and self-propagation are out of date. They'll still do as slogans or decorations -- they're even indispensible. But, as to the true maintenance of independence and initiative, that, it seems, can be dispensed with.

During this trip overseas, I was approached by an [OVER]
American friend who said, "I have a question for you, it's a bit embarrassing, but I'll ask it anyway: Do you [the Chinese church] stress three-self anymore?" If we do not stress three-self anymore, these friends will feel badly for us. The reason that friend asked me this question was because he'd had a letter from one of our colleagues in the Chinese church, a letter asking for donations from overseas. He made a copy of it for me. The letter speaks of how poor China is, how poor pastors are, how dilapidated the churches are and requests that donations be made to a certain organization. The letter went on to say that when it snowed in one place in Xinjiang, a church collapsed and a seminary student was crushed to death. I know this did happen, the student was a graduate of Nanjing Seminary. But we Chinese have many stories to tell, why dwell only on things like this? We do have dilapidated churches, but the largest church in China has been newly built in Zhejiang province. Why not tell about that? Our clergy and church workers are poor, but I know that the person who wrote that letter has a salary of 600-700 rmb per month, which is not low. Why describe all clergy and church workers in China as so poor and miserable? In order to ask for money, this person didn't baulk at minimizing three-self. After reading that letter, I felt extremely embarrassed. Our three-self is no longer three-self; self-support is a fraud. Putting your hand out for money is like begging. Does this mean our Chinese church, after forty years of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, is still stretching its hand out for money? Have we come to this?

This letter is not an isolated incident. For example, when Northeast Seminary wanted to put up a building; someone from the South Korean Church, relying on the fact that he had money, came and said, We'll help you. We'll give you fifty thousand US dollars, but there are conditions attached: the honorary chairman of the board of the seminary must be a Korean, the school policy and curriculum should be matters for mutual consultation, and the admissions procedure must change. Our current admissions procedure is very good: prospective students must be recommended by their local church in order to take the entrance exam. But this person did not like that; he wanted "open admissions". And they said, if the seminary accepted the fifty thousand, they could accept no other international support. They dared to make such demands because they did not know that we are an independent nation and an independent church. There is no difference between their present mentality and that of colonialism in the past. Our colleagues at the Northeast Seminary rightly rejected these demands.

Without giving other examples, let me sum up by saying that we must admit that in terms of independence and initiative, there has been a partial breakdown of thinking in our Chinese church.

Some of our church leaders say that this is the age of the socialist market economy, where money is king, and the church too can make money. Christianity is an ethical religion, there are things we may do and things we may not do, not everything is permitted. We may be poor, but we cannot abandon our [OVER]
principle: if we do, many of our own Christians and our
international friends will be disappointed, and will not respect
us. But some of our colleagues say: the important thing is money
in the hand. When we do these things, we won't tell the national
CCC and TSPM, they don't need to know. They pull the wool over
our eyes, but we find out about it through foreigners. Why do
they want to conceal these things from the national CCC and TSPM?
The aim of the two national Christian bodies is nothing other
than doing our work well. The two national bodies have a great
deal more knowledge of world Christianity than the majority of
our colleagues. We also have much more information available to
us than the majority of colleagues in the local church. And we
have foreign friends who help us understand the inner workings
of world Christianity. The two national Christian bodies are in
a superior position in such matters. Why try to conceal things
from them?

They say pay no attention to the two national bodies, don't
even report to the provincial Christian Council or Three-Self,
because the cadres support them. We know that the majority of
cadres are good or fairly good. But there are some younger ones
who have not studied the history of imperialist aggression in
China through manipulation of religion, nor the history of the
Three-Self Patriotic Movement. They are products of their times,
they think money coming in is always a good thing. We, however,
are Christians who have had considerable education in three-self
patriotism, we ought to have socialist and patriotic
consciousness, we have a sense of political responsibility, and
we cannot abrogate that responsibility. We cannot push everything
off onto the cadres, we have a responsibility to reflect the
situation fully to the cadres and consult with them on how better
to deal with it. The desire to throw off the two national
Christian bodies and do one's own thing, to go seeking money from
abroad without understanding the situation overseas, is not a
good one. In international relationships, special problems and
difficulties may arise on the local level. To discuss these with
the two national Christian bodies, to make these known to the
national CCC and TSPM, to let them help in considering these
problems, has advantages and no disadvantages. Independence is
a serious matter. Let us all consider it well at this meeting.
Do we still need to be independent? If so, what shall we do?
Please make your opinions known.

2. Running the church well.

There are many aspects to running the church well: church
music, women's work, youth work and so on. All these are part of
running the church well. But I hope this meeting will focus
specially on exploring running the grassroots church well; this
is an extremely serious issue. How can the grassroots church be
well run? There are not many churches at the grassroots which are
well run, but quite a few which are in a mess. Our two national
Christian bodies receive numerous letters from local churches
every day, and many are tales of woe from believers: what a
tyrant their pastor is -- what he says goes, and he consults with
no one, he accounts are not public, and donations [OVER]
disappear into his belly, or even pay for his personal travels, the congregation has no say, and the church council never hold elections, etc., etc. We have received many such letters and they cannot help but leave us with the feeling that too many of our churches are very poorly run. Why is this? We haven't looked into this for several decades, we haven't had any control over them. Today because there are some churches which are badly run, many Christians do not go to church for worship, but congregate elsewhere. This is splitting the church, destroying its unity, and it is a very serious matter indeed. So running the grassroots church well can strengthen our grassroots unity and this is not a small matter.

Christianity has a special characteristic in that it is rather organized. It differs in this from Buddhism. In Buddhism a temple is opened and the believers themselves go to burn incense and worship Buddha. Protestantism and Catholicism are much more organized. A church has its church council, it is organized. To run our grassroots churches well, grassroots organization must play its part; this means we must act with a democratic spirit to run each and every grassroots church well: everything in the grassroots church should be done through consultation, contact must be maintained, discussion fostered, and things done publicly. Consultation does not end with soliciting opinions, even less is it a matter of 'I talk and you listen'. Consultation is more than this; consultation is a sincere exchange of views, contact, and study, involving everyone. Consultation is the tradition of the church, whether it is a church with an episcopal system, a presbyterian system, or a congregational system. Consultation is indispensable to all of them. I am a Bishop of the Anglican Church. I know that the authority of an Anglican bishop is not that great; things are not done according to whatever the bishop says. When an Anglican Church calls a vicar, not only must the bishop's approval be sought, the bishop must also consult with the church council. These are two levels, the bishop and the local church, which must consult; it's not that the higher level sends someone and that's it. If this is the case for a church with an episcopal system, it should be even more so for us. Our church today must do things by consultation, only through consultation can problems be solved. Internal problems of grassroots churches and meeting points must be solved through consultation, the national level must consult with the provincial, the provincial with the municipal, the municipal with the county, and the county with the grassroots. In this way, believers will be happier, they will feel they have a say in things. At present, we frequently receive letters telling us: we cannot deal with our pastor, please send someone to remove him from his position. They do not realize that we have no authority to remove someone. If there is a problem, it must be solved through consultation at the grassroots.

The most recent issue of the Nanjing Theological Review carries six or seven essays by seminary students, whose general theme is "Democracy and Church Administration". (These essays will in fact appear in the next issue of the Review. --Ed.) These essays discuss how the church can go about solving [OVER]
problems through consultation. The authors are all second and third year students at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. They return to their churches during summer and winter holidays and have observed a great deal. They're very clear about conditions within the churches. I have brought copies of these essays for all of you, so that you can study them. The authors have studied the Bible and they say that the Christian Church in the first century solved their difficulties through democratic consultation. For example, following Judas' death upon his betrayal of the Lord, there were only eleven Apostles and a twelfth had to be chosen: how was this to be done? By casting lots. It was a rather backward method, but democratic, and democratic election is a good method. Later, when there was some chaos in the church, it was necessary to choose seven people to take charge of church affairs. How was this done? Also by election. Later still, when the Gospel was spread among the Gentiles, another problem presented itself to the Apostles: when non-Jewish believers came to Christ, was it necessary for them to accept Judaism as well? A conference was held in Jerusalem where everyone gave their views. It was a very enthusiastic meeting. Finally disparate views began to come together and James (the leader of the Apostles) summed up. From all these examples, we can see that the early church was very democratic and stressed consultation. The essays by these young people all discuss principles related to this. I find them very helpful.

To summarize: I urge this meeting to focus on exploring two issues, independence and running the church well. Running the church well is a vast topic. I propose that we focus on the problems in the grassroots church and how the spirit of democratic consultation can be fostered in the grassroots church and the leaders of the grassroots church be made accountable to the masses there. I believe this is the heart of the matter.

ANS Feature: Wenzao Han Named As Acting General Secretary Of The China Christian Council

"I won't say that I am just a layman anymore," says Dr. Wenzao Han, when talking of the importance of layleaders in the Chinese church. "Without committed lay leaders, our churches wouldn't function, especially in the countryside. Our church is a lay people's church, and we lay people have an important role to play in making our Christian presence felt in China," says Han.

A case in point, Han has been a layman all his life, and now as the newly appointed acting general secretary of the China Christian Council he is proving that the cornerstone of the church is its dedicated lay people. Replacing Bishop Shen Yifan of Shanghai who died in August, Han will serve in this post until a new general secretary is elected at the National Chinese Christian Conference in 1996.
Wenzao Han has been actively involved with the church since he was a young college student. Born in Shanghai in 1923 into a non-Christian family, Han became a Christian while attending the mission-run Hangchow Christian College. There, he took up a leadership role in the student Christian fellowship, until his studies were temporarily disrupted when the college was relocated to the interior after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. Remaining in Shanghai, Han transferred to St. John's University, where he again was active in the student Christian fellowship. Graduating in 1944 with a degree in civil engineering, Han refused to work under the Japanese military authority, but continued his interest in youth ministries by joining the staff of the Shanghai YMCA.

Han devoted much of his time to student relief work during his service with the YMCA, among his projects running over 10 student cafeterias in mission colleges and government universities for students from needy families. Moving to Nanjing in 1947, Han devoted the next 14 years to helping organize the Nanjing Christian Council as well as the Three Self Patriotic Movement, both on the city and provincial level. In 1961 he returned to campus life, when, at the invitation of Bishop K.H. Ting, he took charge of the administration of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. Han jokingly comments that his career shift was from civil engineering to "human engineering," a choice in which he is grateful for God's guidance.

Han learned the value of the Bible, when during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the Red Guards - China's "revolutionary" teenagers - threatened to destroy the seminary library. Han convinced them to save 10% of the collection, and managed himself to keep one pocket-size New Testament with Psalms for his daily use. Later, the faculty and staff were driven out of the seminary and forced to work in the countryside. The experience, Han says, raised his awareness of the needs of Christians in rural areas and is the basis for his efforts today to improve church work in the countryside.

In 1980, Wenzao Han was appointed associate general secretary of both the national TSPM and the China Christian Council. Since 1986, he has served as executive vice-president of the CCC. In 1985, Han became one of the founders of the Amity Foundation, and has served as its general secretary ever since. He is also the chairman of the board of the Amity Printing Company, Ltd.

As the new acting general secretary of the CCC, Han says there are two priorities on his agenda: "I would like to do as much as possible to bring up a new generation of Christian leadership. I would also like to see a more concerted effort made to serve rural churches." [ANS]

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