New Collection Of Writings By Bishop K.H.Ting To Appear Soon

(ANS) "This book is an important milestone in the history of Chinese theology." So writes Professor of Systematic Theology and Vice-Principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, Chen Zemin, in his Forward to a new collection of the writings of Bishop K.H.Ting, which is due to be published in Chinese and English editions in the Fall of this year. Apart from a few early pieces, this new collection contains over 80 articles and essays by Bishop Ting from the end of the Cultural Revolution to the present day. Many are being published in this volume for the first time.

Since 1952, Bishop K.H.Ting has been President of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. From 1979 until last year he held the posts of President of the China Christian Council and Chair of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement. He is also a Vice-President of Nanjing University and head of its Institute of Religious Research. Bishop Ting has previously served as vice-chair of the Jiangsu Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and is currently vice-chair of the national CPPCC. In almost half a century he has been involved in countless church, political and social movements, scholarly debates and research, education and writing. For several decades, Bishop K.H.Ting was seen throughout the world as the most senior figure within the Chinese Protestant church and is still regarded today as an important spokesperson and theologian within the context of modern Chinese Christianity.
The collection of Bishop Ting's writings in this new volume has been divided into five parts according to content and type: (1) Lectures and talks given while abroad, (2) Theological reflections, (3) "Three-Self" and running the Church well, (4) Religious policy and research on religion, and (5) Reminiscences, Greetings, Forwards and other miscellaneous writings.

Over half of the articles in this current collection touch upon Christian theology. As Chen points out, Bishop Ting has always stressed self-propagation and theological research. "Theology is the Church at reflection," he points out, and a church which does not reflect upon itself is a dying church. "Religion which does not talk about theology is elementary and primitive; religion which does not reflect on certain questions is incompatible with reason." Over the years, Bishop Ting has continually advocated theological reflection on how to integrate Christian faith with the realities of life, a theology which has practical application and is not just philosophical or on paper.

In his theological writings, Bishop Ting has repeatedly underlined Christianity's universality but also its locality. Chen notes how he has continually encouraged the Chinese church to develop its own theology, based on its own realities, experiences and understanding of the faith gathered over the years. Ting himself has set down his own penetrating and thought-provoking reflections on certain central theological issues, such as approaches to the Bible, our understanding of the nature of God and Christ, the concepts of "Creation" and "Salvation", and the workings of human nature. Ting stresses that the Chinese church should not merely copy traditional Western theology and teachings but should primarily draw on its own insights. Chen believes that many of K.H.Ting's writings in this volume can be seen as starting points and models for the discussion and the development of Chinese theology in the future.

Chen writes in his Forward how this new collection of writings is especially aimed at Chinese Christians but also Chinese intellectual circles. Chinese intellectuals have traditionally been critical of Christianity as practised in China and, even in the early 1980's, many intellectuals still saw religion as an "opiate of the masses", with the growth of the church as a kind of "Third Opium War". Ting managed to break down many such barriers in his writings, stressing that religion has something positive to offer and contribute to society. Ting stresses the need to expand ways to find a common language and increased dialogue with what he calls "Culture Christians" or intellectuals sympathetic to and interested in Christianity. Professor Chen expresses the hope that this new collection of writings will attract intellectuals' attention and help them to become engaged in some way with the development of modern Chinese Christianity.

[693 words]

Lay-Training Gets A Boost In Jiangsu

(ANS) As the number of believers, meeting points and churches grows at a phenomenal rate in China, the church as a whole is coming to rely more and more on lay workers to look after the needs of its growing flock. In February of this year, Jiangsu Province required all its lay church workers to sit an examination in order to get a clearer picture of the strengths, weaknesses and abilities of the people largely
responsible for running the church today. Reporters from Tian Feng, the magazine of the Chinese church, visited one of the largest test centres in the province, Luo Yang, and describe how a high degree of support from local officials boosts the work of the church in that area.

The situation in Luo Yang county is typical of Jiangsu and the church in general. It has 330 approved meeting points with 47,000 believers. As Mr Feng, head of the county RAB, points out, Luo Yang was one of the first counties in China to issue all of its meeting points with registration certificates in 1990. The lay workers who serve in Luo Yang have an educational level which is usually below Junior Middle School level. Since 1995, the county church and the local Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) have both been eager to speed up the training of lay workers, as this leads to a noticeable improvement in the way village meeting points are organized and run. One-month classes are held in the Spring and Summer each year to fit in with the demands of farmwork in the villages. Seven out of the 38 villages within the county also hold week-long training classes twice a year.

The local RAB offers as much support as it can to the local church without meddling in its internal affairs. Officials are forbidden to enter into debates with believers about belief and unbelief, and are not allowed to try and persuade believers to become atheists. Mr. Feng believes that one problem is the negative attitude among believers as they squabble among themselves over various issues. He often has to remind them that, although they number 47,000, there are still over one million unbelievers within the county.

When the church encounters difficulties, the local RAB does its best to help smooth things over. Mr Wang of the local RAB cites a case in 1996 when the local government required a church in Luo Yang to pay for the maintenance of a road leading to the church building. Since the church did not have the funds to do this, relations with the local government became tense and officials tried to close the road several times. The local RAB and United Front departments stepped in and mediated between the two parties. In the end, it was agreed that the costs for the road would be shared by the county finance department and by believers raising money among themselves.

It is through such high levels of cooperation between RAB officials and church leaders that the testing of lay workers was able to go ahead smoothly in February. Altogether, 2,900 lay church workers took part in the examination process at 53 test centres throughout the province. The two-hour exam tested candidates on Biblical knowledge, politics, religious law, and Three-Self principles and the church. Most of the workers attending the exam were from village churches and meeting points who had never been ordained or attended seminary.

From the results of the exam, lay workers throughout the province will be divided into three levels and then provided with texts suitable to their level for further systematic study. It is planned that courses in church finance and church management will be added to training courses already in existence. It is also hoped that regional training centres can be set up in the northern and southern parts of the province. Together with centres already opened in the provincial capital, Nanjing, these measures will create a network to facilitate lay training throughout the whole of Jiangsu province. [672 words]
How Should We Regard Miracles?

(ANS) In many rural areas of China today, people's educational level is fairly low and their understanding of faith is limited. As a result, such communities can be easily impressed by seemingly "miraculous" acts of "magic". Various heretical sects have made use of this situation to dazzle people with "miracles" and thereby lure them into joining their sect. Furthermore, many believers in today's Chinese church seek miraculous signs as a confirmation of their faith. Given this situation, Wang Sanyuan discusses the nature of miracles in April's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the Chinese church. Wang warns readers that they should not be too quick to accept everything that is claimed to be a "miracle".

Agreeing that God can and does use miracles at times to help and guide people or otherwise confirm His existence, Wang stresses that faith should not be built on these experiences alone. Rather, faith should be founded on God's Word alone. According to Wang, the Gospel is not about spreading miraculous signs but about spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ who died on the cross.

The writer points out that those who believe in God do not necessarily need miracles to be assured of God's existence, and believers will view the world itself as being full of the miraculous all around them. Moreover, when people do experience miracles, it does not necessarily mean that they will experience God's grace at the same time. Wang points to the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness and also those at the time of Jesus, many of whom witnessed many miracles but still did not come to believe or accept God's grace.

Citing Matthew 24:24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Wang warns believers that God can do miracles but so can Satan. Wang points out that many heretical groups in China today use displays which are designed to impress others so that people will join their heretical group. Therefore, Wang encourages believers not to accept blindly all they see without some kind of enquiry or analysis of the situation. In Christ we have everything we need, and we should discard all "miracles" which do nothing to promote our salvation or our life in Jesus.

Wang concludes that salvation itself, as won for us on the cross by Christ, is the greatest of all God's miracles, and is really the only one we will ever need to experience. Wang reminds believers that Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 12:39-40 and Luke 11:30, criticized his contemporaries for demanding miraculous signs. Through Christ's action on the cross, people throughout all ages and in every land are continually being saved. And, through the same action on the cross, we are able to experience grace and come close to God in ways not even the angels in heaven can experience. This, Wang believes, is the greatest miracle of all. [477 words]
Church Magazine Warns Against "The Bible Code"

(ANS) In recent months, The Bible Code has become something of a bestseller in countries around the world and has now also appeared on bookshelves in China. The authors of the book claim that the Hebrew text of the Bible contained hidden prophecies about later historical events, which come to light after certain mathematical analyses are performed on the letters of the text. As a result of such analyses, the authors of The Bible Code claim that the original Bible texts may still contain some prophecies which are yet to come true. In the April edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the Chinese church, an article entitled "Be Discerning and Avoid Traps" reports an interview with Dr. Tang Chonghui of the International Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, on this topic.

Tang argues that people should look to the Bible for a revelation of God's will rather than treating it as a crystal ball for predicting the future. Citing Deuteronomy 29:29, Tang feels people should attend to those things which God has revealed to them, leaving to God those things that are secret, and concludes that The Bible Code is neither academically sound, pious, or true.

Tang notes that the idea of some kind of secret code embedded in the Bible is not new; in ancient times, for example, some Jews engaged in a form of numerology through which numeric values assigned to letters of the Hebrew alphabet were used to generate prophecies. According to Tang, the method used in The Bible Code is not that much more sophisticated, involving mainly searching in a jumble of letters for clues as to things that have already happened.

A letter in the same edition of Tian Feng summarizes the main claims of the The Bible Code and asks whether or not the book is reliable. The editor's response is that while the book clothes itself in an aura of science and modern Biblical studies, it is actually just another fortune-telling method like so many in the past and should not be readily believed in. The editor stresses that people should look to the Bible for what God desires to reveal through scripture. [361 words]
**ANS Feature:**

**Jiangxi Bible School - The Present And The Future**

During its brief six-year history, Jiangxi Bible School has managed to go from barely managing to scrape by in cramped and inadequate rooms in the Nanchang city church to having a larger, individual campus of its own in the suburbs of the city. However, as former ANS editor, Rev. Claudia Währisch-Oblau, discovered on a recent visit to the area, even the new campus is proving insufficient to meet the needs of the growing church in Jiangxi, and a radical new solution is now called for.

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(ANS) The way forward for Jiangxi Bible School in Nanchang has always been a matter of faith. It started under extremely cramped conditions, in the back rooms of the city church in 1992 (See ANS 95.2.11). The buildings really were inappropriate and, when you look at them today, you wonder how people could have studied and worked under such conditions. But the need for a Bible school was there, and Jiangxi church leaders started it in the hope that they would soon be able to move to larger space.

Several years ago, that dream came true (see ANS 97.1.3). The school was able to move to new grounds in a county town just outside Nanchang city. There, among the fields, a bright and airy building now provides ample space for classrooms as well as accommodation for 40 students. Built with funds provided both from the Theological Education Commission of the CCC and from local donations, the current Jiangxi Bible School is a witness to the thriving development of the church in Jiangxi.

But the school is already getting too small. The number of Christians in the province is over 300,000, with 317 churches and 1,541 registered meeting points. The pressure to provide trained workers to meet the needs of believers in the province is growing. Jiangxi Church leaders are hoping to extend the current one-year course to two-years beginning this Fall, and they would also like to increase the intake of students. However, buying more land to add new buildings has turned out to be impossible, and so a radical solution has been found: The Bible School will move to its new campus in August this year. Until then, much work needs to be done. But, as Rev. Lin says: “God has always provided us with what we have needed.

There, in the middle of a newly-developing industrial area, just next to housing built by the Ford Motor Company for the workers of its joint-venture car assembly plant, sits the dilapidated remains of a bankrupt detergent factory. The Jiangxi Christian Council was able to acquire the spacious area and buildings for only 2.5 million yuan (=US$ 302,000 approx.).

When, on a warm April afternoon, our German church delegation was taken there, the scene we encountered was impressive. Dozens of church workers from different Nanchang churches were hard at work: Women in Wellington boots and work clothes scrubbing down old office buildings, men dismantling machinery in an old factory hall, cheerful activity everywhere.

Rev. Lin Feng, the young Director of the Bible School and General Secretary of the Jiangxi Christian Council, proudly showed us around. And, with just a little imagination, we were able to see the future of Jiangxi Bible School: Dormitory rooms in the former office building, a dining hall and class rooms in an old shed, the library in what used to be a warehouse, a sports ground where right now weeds are growing over discarded junk, and a huge church building with 3,000 seats in the converted main machinery hall.

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Surrounded By Beauty, Rich In The Spirit

Zhangjiajie City lies nestled in the northwest corner of Hunan Province in what is known as the "Wulingyuan Scenic Area". It boasts a spectacular landscape of craggy peaks towering above luxuriant subtropical forests. Waterfalls, limestone caves, fresh streams and rivers suitable for rafting are now helping make the area a favorite for both domestic and international tourists. In April this year, as part of a tour of churches and projects run by the Arntt Foundation in Hunan Province, Rev. Ewing W. Carroll, Jr., Overseas Coordinator of the Arntt Foundation, visited the church in Zhangjiajie and reports on the situation for believers in one of the most beautiful and rapidly growing parts of China.

Looking Eastward down the Feng River which borders Zhangjiajie, the city's growing skyline includes the Notre Dame-like spire of the yet unfinished Protestant Gospel Church. Shrouded in bamboo scaffolding, the church occupies a spot where Finnish missionaries oversaw the construction of the area's first Protestant church. Before the new building's roof was completed, worshippers gathered under a huge canvas tarpaulin in rain or shine, cold or heat to sing praises to God.

Finnish Lutheran missionaries were attracted to this area around 1907 by the proliferation of national minorities and bandits. Subsequently, a church building was opened with additional buildings constructed over the years, including educational and medical facilities. The new building is an imposing structure visible from many parts of Zhangjiajie. Grateful for his contributions to the development of religious activity throughout China, local church leaders invited Bishop K. H. Ting, former President of the China Christian Council, to do the Chinese calligraphy for the church's name stretched across the front of the building.

There are over 20,000 Christians in the greater Zhangjiajie area, with more than 2,000 in the city proper. The Gospel Church has a membership of 1,400 with average Sunday worship attendance around 950 believers. With a large three-sided balcony, the church is being constructed to comfortably hold nearly 2,000 worshippers. Since resuming activity in the early 1980's, the Gospel Church has experienced a significant increase in membership, with an annual growth of over 300 newly baptized believers over the past five years.

Gospel Church has no ordained clergy and depends totally upon volunteer lay members for leadership. One member of the congregation told our visiting delegation, "We are all volunteers. There's no arguing about who should do this or that. We just simply work together for the Lord."

A sixty-voice choir sings in the regular weekly services and performs special music for Christmas and Easter. A small foot-pedaled organ accompanies the choir and congregation for hymns and anthems. Church members have themselves woven amazingly comfortable straw stools. Seen from the balcony, they closely resemble the circular kneeling pads one sees in Buddhist temples.

Church activity goes beyond the Sunday morning worship service. There is weekly Sunday School for 20-30 children and some 60-70 persons attend Bible studies each Wednesday and Friday. Since many worshippers travel long distances for the Sunday service, there is a prayer meeting immediately following worship. This normally attracts several hundred participants. The congregation is also divided into eleven Bible study/witness groups, each led by a volunteer worker.

Although most church leaders hold full time jobs, members of the Church Affairs Committee meet daily to enable smooth operation of the church and to oversee continued construction of the new church building. They also assist volunteer graduates of the Hunan Provincial Bible School in providing leadership for nine local meeting points. Part of their responsibility includes organizing home visitation for urban members and inquirers.

Like most churches in China, the theological orientation of Gospel Church is evangelical and conservative. The Sunday
During an informal meeting between church leaders and our tour group, the question was asked: "Why do people become Christian in Zhangjiajie?" One elderly lay woman quickly and enthusiastically replied: "We want to be saved by Jesus. I was attracted by the love of God and wanted to be blessed by God. Furthermore, since God loves me so much, I want to share that love with others."

Members of the Gospel Church said, "We live in a beautiful area and we are blessed by God, but we are economically poor." Even with church members and friends doing most of the construction work on the new church building, there remains a shortfall of nearly 220,000 yuan (=US$ 26,580 approx.) to complete the task. Many members, unable to make any significant financial contribution, offer their labor and prayers and willingly share rice and vegetables with others engaged in the construction work.

When later discussing their experience at Gospel Church, our group recalled the concluding words of Yang Xiaorong's Second Coming sermon: "Use all your present strength, time and energies for Christ and His church." Our collective impression was that, although Gospel Church's members are economically poor, living in an area of vast natural resources, they are firmly committed to use their strength, time and energy to be Christ's faithful servants in these changing times.
Excerpts From The Letter Page Of Tian Feng

The letters to the editors of the Chinese church magazine, Tian Feng, give readers a glimpse of daily church life with all its joys and problems. To give our readers an idea of the breadth and width of the issues discussed, we are documenting here questions and answers from the March issue of the church magazine.

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What is required to be able to attend seminary?

To the editors:

Since the time I first came to believe in the Lord Jesus, I have felt a special concern for the many churches that do not have evangelists. I hope very much that someday I might, through the grace and wisdom of God, be able to enter the pulpit myself and spread the Gospel, bringing glory to God and benefitting people.

However, although I have this great enthusiasm for the Lord, I currently lack the knowledge and ability required. I thus long to enter Seminary to receive the necessary training. At this point in time, however, I am not certain about the procedures for entering Seminary and am thus making this enquiry of you. Please tell me about the qualifications required and the conditions to be met in order to enter Seminary. How does a person register to take the Entrance Examination? How much is the tuition?

-- Ma Lianyou, Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province

Response:

I am truly delighted to see your dedication. Everywhere today our church still faces a situation of "many sheep, few shepherds" and we urgently need the Lord to provide a larger number of workers. We hope to have many more young believers like you who, having heard the Lord's call, resolve to offer their whole selves for God's service in order that the Gospel might spread.

Seminary (or Bible School) is the place where evangelists are trained. Those who meet the requirements can apply to take the Entrance Examination. However, if someone lacks a certain requirement, that person can still join lay worker training courses, take Bible correspondence courses or engage in a systematic program of self study in order to be equipped and prepared to be used by the Lord.

Those who want to take the Seminary Entrance Examination must first raise this with their local congregation or church council. At the current time, seminaries in China do not usually receive applications to for the Entrance Examination directly from individuals. Application forms and notes for guidance on applications are sent to each provincial Christian Council, with a few also being sent to some city and county level church organizations. Those who want to sign up for the Entrance Examination must therefore contact their local church organization. Furthermore, there is also the question of recommendations when people apply to take the exam. If the local church organization is willing to recommend someone, they thereby take on responsibility for the candidate's study fees each semester (according to their means). After graduation, they will also be responsible for arranging a candidate's work assignment (seminaries are not responsible for this). At the same time, through the recommendation requirement, the local church provides a kind of confirmation of the standard of the candidate applying to take the Entrance Exam. Therefore, before applying to take the Entrance Examination, I would hope that you would be able to participate in some of the church's work, allowing all sides to deepen their understanding of each other.
Five subject areas are generally covered in the examination: 1) Basic Knowledge Of Christianity (central beliefs, church history, etc.); 2) Chinese language, 3) History, 4) Politics, and 5) English. However, the level required in each of these subjects varies from school to school.

A Senior Middle School education or its equivalent is required for entry to a four-year undergraduate seminary program. Entry to two- or three-year seminary training programs usually require a Junior Middle School level or above. During the course of study itself, students can apply to the school for a supplementary grant to help out with daily living costs and also for a waiver of tuition fees.

Students taking the exam are usually around 18 - 30 years old, in good health, and without any serious disabilities or history of mental illness. Each year the deadline for registration is usually some time in the Spring.

At present, there are 17 theological centers located in different places around the country. They are divided into three categories according to how they are administered - at a national, regional or provincial level. Taking a candidate from Zhejiang Province as an example, that student could register to sit the Entrance Examination to three different schools: at the national level it would be for Jinling Union Theological Seminary in Nanjing; at the regional level it would be for Huadong Seminary; and at the provincial level it would be Zhejiang Seminary.

How Should You Use "Amen" When Praying?

To the editors:

When praying and other people say "Amen" after each sentence of the prayer, is this acceptable or not?

-- Xu Jiatian, Changzhou City, Jiangsu Province

Response:

"Amen" is a word which is rich with meaning. It expresses, "Yes", "It is just like this," or "I sincerely wish it this way" and other similar meanings (the New Testament sometimes translates it as "May it be done"). It is a word used by all of us in individual or corporate prayers. If you agree or are deeply moved while other people are praying, responding with an "Amen" is fine. Of course, if someone is not accustomed to this kind of thing or if, because of the situation, they do not say "Amen" after each sentence but just at the end when everyone else says "Amen" together, this is also fine. It is not necessary to demand uniformity in this matter.

In the Bible there are records of people responding to the prayers of others by saying "Amen," such as in 1 Corinthians 14:16 and Revelation 7:9-12. Doing this is not only an outward expression that believers are joining in a prayer with their hearts and minds, it also creates a general atmosphere of respect, piety and zeal. When another person's prayer strikes a particular chord with you, you can still say "Amen" in your heart, even if you don't say it aloud with your mouth. Otherwise, there is a danger that the congregation will not pay attention (especially during relatively long prayers) to the point where they just become passive listeners of other people praying. Therefore, I feel that, while praying, there is nothing wrong with adding a response of "Amen." Nonetheless, we need to be careful not to let our "Amen" become a word devoid of all meaning. Furthermore, we should add our "Amen" in accordance with the content of the prayer and not just automatically blurt it out regardless of what is being prayed. Besides "Amen," the congregation can also sometimes use the words "Alleluia," or "Praise the Lord," etc. as responses.
Inculturation Of The Gospel And Hymn Singing In China

Music and hymns play a central role in the life of most churches throughout the world. In an article featured originally in the Chinese Theological Review (Volume 11:2), retired Professor of Systematic Theology and Vice-Principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, Chen Zemin, discusses the position and nature of hymn singing in the church in China. Below are extracts from Professor Chen's article, highlighting the challenges the Chinese church faces as it tries to develop a musical tradition of its own.

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Hymn singing is that vital part of church life that most convincingly illustrates the possibility, necessity, desirability and mutuality of inculturation of the gospel. It is vital because it grips the heart and soul of the congregation. In an average worship service or "meeting" of eighty minutes in China (sometimes lengthened to two hours or more in the rural churches) at least one-third of the time is devoted to singing, in which the whole congregation participates heartily. The sermon, unfortunately, may not always be powerful and interesting. When it gets too long and boring, the listeners may become absent-minded, doze, or day-dream. The scripture lessons, read by one or two persons and without much active congregational participation, may be "far-fetched" and perfunctory. The prayers, if voiced simultaneously and out loud, may seem mutually distracting and confusing. But when hymn singing is announced, every one becomes alert and eager to join in, either to learn a new song or to savor some beloved familiar hymns that reverberate in the soul. Hymn singing never fails to bless a church with vibrant life, and to attract newcomers to be "touched" by the gospel. I am not belittling the importance of the sermon, the Scripture and prayer in the life of Christian communities, nor the need for inculturation in all these aspects. In fact, all these must be contextualized or incultured in order to be effective if the Gospel is to change the life of a community or individuals.

A Singing Church

There has been a rapid church growth since its revival in 1979. The total number of worshippers is conservatively estimated to be over fifteen million. The number of "churches" has increased at an average rate of 3 churches in every two days since 1980, with a current total of over ten thousand, plus over twenty thousand "meeting points" (congregations without permanent church buildings which depend mostly on lay leadership). Many churches are large enough to hold one thousand worshippers, and many have to hold two or three services on Sunday (or Saturday). Most congregations spend about half an hour in hymn singing before and during services. Over half of the churches have choirs (some have two or more choirs) to help congregational singing and for special "sung offerings". Many newcomers are attracted to the church by hymn singing.

Western or Chinese?

Most Christians are accustomed to and prefer Western hymns and gospel songs. Over 90 per cent of hymns sung by congregations (and choirs) are Western. Many foreign visitors have observed that almost all the hymns sung in the services are those that are quite well known in the West. There is no reason not to treasure the great traditional hymns like Holy, Holy, Holy, O God, Our Help in Ages Past, O Master Let Me Walk with Thee, Rock of Ages, Jesus Loves Me, etc. Three-quarters of the 400 hymns in the New Hymnal are Western in origin, and over half of these are "gospel songs." Some hymn leaders and choir directors, especially in the city churches, have shown a tendency to regard the few Chinese hymn tunes as "secular," "pagan," or even "vulgar" and not "Christian" enough; therefore not suitable for a worship service. Even the use of Chinese instruments as accompaniment or solo during worship services is thought too secular. They tend to think that Western music is "superior" to Chinese. It is very difficult to change this pro-Western mentality. Some have asked "Why Chinese? Is it not sufficient to be just Christian?" According to these people to be Christian means Western. But rural areas where most worshippers have not cultivated this kind of pro-Western "mind-set" often show

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a special liking for Chinese hymns and enjoy singing them. They find it difficult to sing half-tones (4th and 7th in the Western heptatonic scale), and delight in singing simple pentatonic melodies. I have seen whole congregations in many rural churches spiritually singing indigenous Chinese hymns accompanied by the er-hu, pipa, bamboo flutes and other instruments. I think they are more worshipful in this way than they would be listening to Bach's B-minor Mass.

In compiling the New Hymnal in 1981-82, the Hymnal Committee made special efforts to encourage the writing of original Chinese hymns with Chinese tunes, and after screening hundreds of "contributions," finally decided to include about fifty "new" hymns in the Hymnal, (the other fifty Chinese hymns were considered "old" as they were written before 1949). I have heard many Western visitors who, after hearing these hymns sung in the churches or from cassette tapes, comment that they sound "very Western" to them. Now, what is it that makes a hymn Chinese? What are the valid criteria by which one can judge whether a hymn is really Chinese or not? These are very difficult questions to answer. Some hold that it is the nationality of the composer that determines the Chineseness. Others believe that it is the subjective feeling or reaction on hearing the hymn. Perhaps different people give different answers. This is not a question of better, less good or bad hymns. The issue is that as the Chinese Church is trying to change the former infamous and unwelcome image of Christianity as an "imported foreign religion" into one that is really Chinese, whether it is necessary, possible and desirable to change its hymnody to make it more Chinese. The purpose of the Hymnal Committee is to try to encourage production of more hymns that will appeal more to the sensitivity of Chinese Christians at large, to their minds and hearts in public worship and private devotion. Personal taste and liking may have a part to play in making judgments. I believe majority opinion and time will be the court of final appeal.

Assimilation With Classical Or Folk Music

China has a rich historical cultural legacy in music. The repertory of *gu qin* (a long lute or zither with seven strings) and of other classical instruments is an abundant wealth and resource to be tapped and appropriated for religious uses through reproduction and arrangement.

Music of the Minority Ethnic Nationalities

Of the fifty-three ethnic nationalities in China, many are well-known for their talents in dancing and singing. Korean and Miao Christians are exceptional in the use of harmony in their choral singing. The Miao have compiled a hymnal with four-part staff notation, but they are accustomed to singing in harmony spontaneously (faking) by ear, usually a cappella. I think the Chinese ethnic nationalities are a rich mine of talent which we should make special endeavours to tap and excavate for the development of church music in China.

Is There a Role for Buddhist and Taoist Music?

One of the earliest Chinese hymns to be included in many Western hymnals is *God, We Praise You for This Lord's Day* (words later revised by T.C. Chao). The tune name is Pu-to, the name of an island off the coast of Zhejiang province, known for the famous Buddhist monastery situated there. The tune was originally the melody of the chanting of the monks in the temple. As a Christian hymn, it was sung in many churches in southern China in different local dialects. Perhaps it was the very first Chinese hymn tune to be included in many Western hymnals. Recently, I learned that it had been used to set a poem written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to music. Most congregations in China did not know it had originated in Buddhist tradition, and found it quite congenial to their faith. But when its Buddhist origins became known to the learned hymnal editors, it was discarded because of its "syncretistic nuances." Over eighty per cent of Chinese Christians are fundamentalists, and any suggestion of assimilating Buddhist or Taoist elements in hymn singing (or in translating) would be immediately met with opposition and protest.

Now Buddhists and Taoists in China have developed their temple music to an amazing degree, and have produced many high quality recordings for propagation and distribution. Most are traditional in style and very beautifully performed. But occasionally I seem to detect in their temple ensembles some resemblance to Western melodies and even phrases or lines of Christian hymn tunes wrapped up in traditional instrumental accompaniments plus modern electronic sound mixer. Perhaps Buddhist and Taoist believers are less afraid of being
"contaminated" by the Christian religion. It may take some time before we can have interfaith dialogues in China, but would it be possible and profitable to begin right now to try to have some interfaith musical dialogue? I like to quote Paul's admonition in Philippians 4:8 for our Chinese Christian friends who are afraid of being syncretistic in hymn singing, as well as in other areas of Christian expression:

"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

NEWSBRIEFS

Women's affairs: Taking "Who is my neighbour?" as their theme, 600 women met in Shanghai's Mu'en church on 6th March this year at a special prayer service for women. Pastor Lin Weizi delivered the main message, calling on all believers to be attentive to the needs of those around them in their daily lives, as well as being faithful in interceding for those believers in other places and countries. The Mu'en church drama group then underlined Pastor Lin's message with a dramatization of the story of the Good Samaritan. The worship service was followed by a meeting held in honour of International Women's Day on 8th March, where several participants shared their own witnesses of God's grace in their lives. Offerings given at both meetings were presented to the Shanghai Christian Home for the Elderly.

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New Municipality: Members of the church in Chongqing have met for the first time since the city's designation as a municipality of China last year (see ANS 97.12.2). 124 representatives from the 27 districts within the new municipality gathered between 14-16 January this year to elect new leadership for the church. The representatives also established a new Chongqing Christian TSPM Committee and Chongqing Christian Council to oversee church affairs within the municipality. Vice-chairman and General Secretary of the National TSPM Committee, Pastor Deng Fucun, attended and addressed the meeting and extended his congratulations to the new leadership team.

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Religious Laws: Shanghai City held a week of publicity and information-sharing concerning China's religious laws between 1st -7th March this year. During the week streets within each district of the city organized various publicity campaigns to raise public awareness about laws concerning religious practices. Places of religious activity also fixed banners and chalkboard displays to their outer walls to pass on information on the laws. The main aim of all the activities was to spread the message that respecting and preserving the freedom of religious belief is one of China's most basic policies.
Help For The School-less: Due to a period of drought last year, harvests in Zhechuan County, Henan Province were smaller than usual last year, causing severe hardship for peasant families already struggling to make ends meet. As a result of the bad harvest, many families could not afford to pay school expenses and some children had to break off their education as a result. On learning of this situation, members of the county-level Office of Minority and Religious Affairs together with members of the Zhechuan Christian Council inspected schools in the area and chose 14 students in seven different primary schools to receive financial aid in order to continue their studies. The church in Zhechuan already has a history of helping out the local community in need. Last year it provided bedding, clothing, money, grain, furniture and shoes for the poverty-stricken in the area, as well as participating in road repairs and tree planting throughout the county.

Shenyang Church Putting The Past Behind It

(ANS) A few years ago, the church in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, was wrought with conflicts between older and younger pastors. The conflicts were largely generational but also related to the resurgence of denominationalism within the church and squabbles over the best way to approach reclaiming church property. Tensions grew to the point where one of the younger pastors, Rev. Gao Liangyi, was arrested in 1994 and detained on a charge of assault (see ANS 94.4/5.16). In April last year, a repentant Rev. Gao was restored to his position within the church and appointed Associate Pastor of the city's Dongguan church (see ANS 97.9.4). Tian Yu, staff reporter with the magazine of the Chinese church, Tian Feng, visited the church in Shenyang recently and reported the findings in the May edition of the publication.

"This is now a golden period for the Dongguan church," comments senior pastor, Rev. Lü Zhibin, as she points out the construction site of a new church building next to the present one. Pastor Gao echoes these sentiments: "The most important thing for us is to forget the past and build up the body of Christ united and with one heart." Both pastors agree that, although problems between young and old can sometimes not be avoided, they can be settled if approached with a loving heart and much communication, rather than attacking and blaming one another. This is the lesson the church workers at the Dongguan church have learned, reports Tian.

Good communication between church members is now emphasized in all areas of church life. A process of "democratization" has slowly been taking root in all areas of church life, with church members meeting together to discuss a wide range of issues. A whole host of activities take place each day of the week within the church, and care is taken to reach out with messages suited to believers at different stages of their faith journey within the church. Tian describes the gatherings for worship on Sunday mornings as "a picture of revival and rejuvenation."

The church is seeking to solve its generational conflicts by promoting the training and increasing the responsibilities of younger and middle-aged members of
the congregation. Some church workers, who have already received some training, have been selected to attend further courses of study at the local Northeast China Seminary. As with other cities in China, Shenyang is facing the gradual ageing of its population. As a result, Rev. Gao is leading the church in administering its own old people's home, with 20 residents at the present time. Rev. Gao has arranged for local Christian doctors to visit the home in their spare time and give free check-ups to the residents.

Rev. Lü of the Dongguang church is also Principal of the Northeast China Seminary. She comments how there has been a "revolution" in the canteen of the seminary of late, started by local believers who noticed that the seminary food left a lot to be desired. Students often ate simply, without an adequate balance in their diet, and in the long term this was affecting their health and ability to study. In order to remedy this situation, the Dongguang church sent in a very able and talented believer who in turn formed a "squad" to help offer nutritious meals and variety of choice at an affordable price. These believers willingly and regularly give up 10 or more hours of their day as their own small part in helping train future evangelists and pastors for the church.

Tian notes how it is not only the Dongguang church that gets involved when it perceives a need in the surrounding community. The city of Shenyang has a large Korean population due to its proximity to the Korean peninsula. In the city's Xita church, over 300 Korean women believers have organized themselves into a "Women's Evangelism Group," which has built up a good reputation for itself through its services to the local community. The group uses its limited income, derived mostly from members selling vegetables, to help the families of local people who are struggling to make ends meet due to unemployment or physical handicap. The group also takes emergency food and clothing to those in need, many of the clothing items knitted by the women themselves. The group is especially active in promoting family issues, trying to work in local neighbourhoods where the incidence of divorce has risen sharply in recent years. The group even writes and performs small dramas about faith issues, inviting non-believing husbands of members of the congregation to watch these performances. In this way they can reach out to these men and allow them to share a little in the life of their wives' church. According to Tian, 200 such husbands have applied for baptism since the Women's Group was formed.

[804 words]

Reaching Out To China's Smallest Minority Group

(ANS) With only around 4,000 people, the Dulong represent China's smallest officially recognized minority group. Located in the northwestern corner of Yunnan province, close to the Burmese border, the minority did not even have their own name in Mandarin Chinese until after the foundation of the People's Republic. Only after 1949 did former Premier Zhou Enlai choose the name Dulong and designate their part of Yunnan as an autonomous minority area. In the May issue of the church magazine Tian Feng, Ye Xi describes his impressions of this minority group, collected during several missions into this remote, poor and sparsely populated border region.

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In September 1994, Ye conducted the first ever training course in pastoral work ever held in the Du Long area. After one month in the middle of a humid jungle full of mosquitoes and without any electricity, Mr. Ye left with a deep respect for the high spirits and endurance of the Dulong people. Since then, he has returned several times to conduct further training courses. The curriculum of such courses not only includes fundamental hermeneutics and training in pastoral duties but also daily lessons in the written-form of the local Dulong language, in an attempt to preserve the minority's culture and also eradicate illiteracy among its people.

The Dulong live a very simple life in the harsh conditions of their region. As the soil is barren, hunting forms an important source of food and livelihood. During the training courses, Ye noted how students would often go out into the surrounding jungle and mountainous areas to search for food. However, a spirit of community and sharing is also a central characteristic of the Dulong. Whenever anyone brings back food, they do not keep it all for themselves or sell it but merely distribute it evenly among the local households and people.

A further characteristic of the Dulong is their attachment to story-telling in their own language, which they use as a method for transmitting and preserving their own customs and heritage. As Ye says, "Anyone who is not able to tell stories about his own people cannot be considered a real Dulong." Given this fact, Ye found the most suitable method of sharing the Gospel message with the minority group was to present it in the form of stories in the style of the Dulong's own narratives.

Ye points out that some areas of the Du Long Autonomous Region are barely accessible. While settlements along the lower reaches of the Du Long River have had exposure to Christianity for more than 50 years already, the members of the minority living along the remote upper reaches of the river have still to hear the Gospel message. Ye once tried to penetrate such areas a couple of years ago but adverse conditions at the time led him to abandon his mission. He hopes to make another attempt to reach these areas some time in the near future. [490 words]

Unemployment: A Challenge To The Church

(ANS) In recent years and months, the economic system of China has undergone a radical restructuring. Gone are the days of the "iron rice bowl", when everyone had an assigned job guaranteed for life by the State. As they try to stay afloat in the new market economy, many State concerns are now laying off workers, often in large numbers. Many of those made redundant are middle aged, with elderly parents and a young family to take care of. Illness can also undermine the ability of some to find new work. In May's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the Chinese church, a writer going under the pen name of Ming Guang ("bright light") points out that the defining characteristic of the church, the Body of Christ, is love. Ming asserts that, if this is truly the case, the church needs to respond to this new need now.
Ming admits that the church is a spiritual body and, as such, is different from a commercial enterprise or ordinary charitable institution. However, even though the church's main concern is and should be for a person's soul, the Bible gives many examples of how believers should express love through the sharing of wealth and material blessings.

The first step in helping those in need, Ming says, is finding out the extent of the problem. Pastoral workers and evangelists should make a point of calling at believers' homes and enquiring directly about situations of poverty or hardship which may exist there. In many churches this already takes place but, as Ming points out, it is precisely in the larger town and cities, where congregations are larger and home visits harder to schedule, that unemployment is at its worst. Many churches have also become, as Ming calls them, "activity centres", where evangelists are so busy trying to organize meetings within the church that they rarely have time to get out and find out what is going on in believers' home situations.

Due to a lack of church workers, many pastors in China are responsible for the needs of thousands, even tens of thousands of believers in their area. Naturally, under such conditions, it is impossible for the pastors themselves to do all the work needed to minister to those in need. Yet incredibly, Ming notes, many pastors seem to equate "believers" with "listeners", and do not think of tapping the potential contained within their own congregation for it to become a true "priesthood of all believers." Ming believes a willingness to accept division of labour needs to be adopted within the church as a whole, as well as the mutual sharing of information between church leaders and laity about where needs lie and how they can be addressed. Already many churches naturally form work teams in the countryside when help is needed to bring in the harvest. Ming asks why churches cannot organize themselves in a similar way to help those among them in need.

Finally, churches have to have means available to help those caught out by unemployment or other situations which prevent them from caring for their families. Ming cites the example of one church where they set aside 5% of their weekly offering towards a distress fund. This church has laid down clear guidelines about how the funds should be distributed and to whom. It also holds special offerings especially for contribution to this fund. As a result, this church, although not very well off itself, has managed to provide emergency medical treatment and poverty relief to many households and individuals during the past year since its fund was started. Churches everywhere need to prioritize how they distribute their incomes, making sure that the needy among them are taken care of before investing money less important projects. [627 words]

Taking The Lord's Name In Vain

(ANS) In past years, consumers in China have been faced with poor service, sullen treatment and insolent behaviour on the part of sales assistants. In order to effect a change in this situation in recent times, a new phrase has come into common usage within China, which translates literally as "The Customer is God." The word used for "God" here is the same word used in worship by Protestant Chinese Christians.

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More and more Christians in China are now taking offence at this misuse of their God's name. At the recent first session of the ninth meeting of the National Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (NCPPCC), Rev. Cao Shengjie issued a written statement calling on this misuse of the Lord's name to end.

In her statement, Rev. Cao points out that God is the object of worship for Chinese Christians, and that comparing customers to God is inappropriate. A believer's attitude toward God is one of pious reverence, worship and surrender in obedience, and it is obvious that a customer's relationship to a sales clerk cannot be compared with this. Rev. Cao states that religious believers associate God with ultimate truth and perfection, concepts which are hardly likely be present in the average customer in a store. Thus, using God's name for propaganda purposes does harm to the sensibilities of believers in the church and also debases the value of the concept of "God" among the general population.

Rev. Cao goes on to express concern with the sentiment behind the catchphrase "The customer is God." She points to another recent piece of sales propaganda which states "Customers are always right - even if they are wrong, they are still right, because they put food in our mouths and clothes on our backs." Rev. Cao points out that this way of thinking gives rise to a climate where that which is considered right or true becomes merely that which is beneficial to us personally. This means that, ultimately, people could lose sight of what is right or wrong. She expresses concern that the rights of sales clerks and service personnel in China may get lost in such thinking, leaving them open to attacks and insults from customers with no way to protect themselves.

Rev. Cao concludes her statement by advocating more realistic slogans for improving service quality whilst at the same time protecting the rights of service personnel and approaching customers in a more appropriate manner. She suggests new slogans, such as "Our goods are genuine, our prices honest - no deception!", or something like "Treat customers politely and serve them with satisfaction," as more realistic and appropriate, leaving "God" out of the equation entirely. [442 words]

ANS Feature:

Discerning The Ecumenical Movement From Chinese Perspectives

In January 1997 Rev. Gao Ying, one of the first graduates of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in the mid-1980's and former pastor at Chongwenmen Church in Beijing, was assigned for one year as the China Christian Council's first representative to the World Council of Churches since China's re-entry into the ecumenical body in 1991. At the end of her appointment in January this year, Rev. Gao presented a work report to the WCC Asia Desk on her thoughts about the ecumenical movement at present from a Chinese perspective. Below is an extract from her report.

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The ambiguity of the modern missionary movement in China is demonstrated in that, while it brought the Christian Gospel to China, it also served as an arm of Western expansionism in China. While

the Western powers carved out their respective spheres of influence in China, so did the Christian mission boards from those countries. This led to two distinct features of the Protestant churches in China, namely, their
grateful for the warmth and understanding of the ecumenical family; meanwhile, this distinct experience also brings with it inevitably some sobering loneliness when we compare notes with sister churches. To cite one instance, while sitting in the Faith and Order Commission meetings devoted to the discussion of Christian unity, a participant from China cannot help feeling that some from the European churches sometimes tend to assume that the Holy Spirit is a monopoly of Western-apostolic churches and thus any church experience beyond the Western experience must be doubtful and questioned.

The pain of separation between the Christian Church of China and the ecumenical family was, I believe, equally felt in the Chinese church and the world churches. Whenever remembering the prayer of our Lord "That all might be one," we in China cannot help asking ourselves "Where are we now in God's sight?" We are grateful that God in God's own good time brought the Chinese church and the world churches together again in the ecumenical family. It led to a revived zeal in the Chinese church to learn about the World Council anew after forty years since her founding. On the part of the World Council, a China Ecumenical Formation Program was set up and the China Christian Council (CCC) was invited to appoint a representative in this program. This has contributed greatly to the understanding and solidarity between the CCC and the WCC, which will bear its fruit, I believe, in the years to come.

I am grateful to have been assigned as the first CCC representative to the WCC after forty years estrangement. Soon after my arrival, a colleague on the administrative staff told me that many years ago, when she began to work with a leader of the WCC, she so often heard the name of K.H. Ting and now, after forty years, she felt so excited to see a person coming directly from China to work in the World Council. This has led me to consider the meaning of continuity and discontinuity in church relations in the ecumenical movement vis-a-vis world history. Standing on the threshold of a new century, Christians in China are deeply aware of being a part of the Church Universal. The growth of the Chinese church cannot be isolated from the growth of the world churches, and the World Council is helping us in furthering our ties with churches in other parts of the world.

Was it an irony of history that the Chinese participation of the new born WCC had to go through a major twist? When the Cold War took shape in the post-war years, war broke out on the Korean Peninsula in 1950. For the first time in her history, and "fortunately" the only time, the World Council took sides in the military confrontation of the two camps during the Cold War in favor of a US led "New International Order" (Marlin Vanelderen, *Introducing the World Council of Churches*, WCC Publication Geneva, p.25). This led not only to the resignation of Dr. T.C. Chao from the presidium of the WCC, but also to a forty-year estrangement between the churches of China and the World Council. It was only after the Cold War ended, when the WCC held its Seventh Assembly in 1991 in Canberra, that the China Christian Council resumed membership within the World Council.

The forty years from the early 1950s to early 1990s meant for the Chinese churches an ordeal by fire and also a rejuvenation in the loving grace of God. What marked her countenance while emerging from this trial by fire? Externally, the church in China lives in a society governed by an openly atheistic political party. Internally, after severing her ties with the Western mission boards, the Chinese churches began experimenting with forms of united worship and later a post-denominational model in church polity. These forty years' experience probably give some uniqueness to the Chinese Church within the ecumenical movement. The Chinese Protestants are
Like the blink of an eye, my one-year assignment has come to an end. What have I learned in the course of the year? This question is a heart-searching process that has just begun and will probably continue for some time after my return to China. The main points which come to my mind are as follows:

a) The warmth of a genuine ecumenical fellowship. Coming from the more or less homogeneous society and cultural heritage of China, one is struck by the different ethnic identities, cultural heritages, varieties of language, denominational lines, different skin colours, etc., represented in the World Council. In Geneva, with so many UN agencies and other world political and economic bodies, this is nothing phenomenal. What makes the World Council unique is the warmth of fellowship. Since I was with the Asia Desk and have had more opportunities for getting to know the staff, I can say I feel quite fond of my friends here for their ecumenical commitment, providing various social services to needy ones through their daily work. From my pastoral experience, I believe that loving care for others is the one essential quality in ecumenical relationships. I am especially grateful to all my friends at the Asia Desk who have shown their love and care for me and have helped me greatly in many ways. I trust that this spirit will be carried on after the WCC's restructuring. We love one another not because we are the same but because we, as Christians from all parts of the world, agree to differ and resolve to love. I believe this is the biggest asset and strength of the World Council.

b) As someone coming from a non-Christian family background and baptized into the post-denominational Chinese church, I have little knowledge of the historical denominational traditions of Christianity other than what I have learned from my seminary years. I have been glad to make up for my lack of knowledge in this respect during this year. My exposure to the different emphases of the various denominations in doctrine, theology, liturgy and church polity help me to respect the differences. Last May, I was invited as a guest of the WCC Women's Desk to participate in the European Orthodox Women's Seminar. It was my first experience of the life of Orthodox churches, and gave me a first-hand opportunity to get acquainted with the liturgy and theology of the Orthodox Church. We worship the same almighty God. All the differences in our religious experience serve only to enrich our lives in God. For this reason, I wish that I could have further opportunities to learn more about Eastern Orthodoxy. During my stay in Geneva, I have been going to the Sunday services of different denominational churches, especially those that we do not have in China, such as the Eastern churches, and also to the Jewish synagogue. All these experiences help to enhance my vision of the Church Universal and the meaning of the ecumenical movement.

c) At the invitation of the WCC Secretariat for Ecumenical Relationships, I was invited to attend the International Seminar of the WCC on Pentecostalism. This was my first experience of meeting with Pentecostals and getting to know Pentecostalism at first hand. Although there is no Pentecostal Church in China today, many Christians in rural meeting points adopt practices of faith-healing and the search for miracles as their favoured way of expressing their faith. They resemble the Pentecostals pretty much. Through my better understanding of Pentecostalism, I now understand our own congregations in the countryside better also. As the history of the Christian church reveals to us, whenever the church becomes over-institutionalized and loses her early vigour, there will always be new forms of expression of faith among the ranks of Christians. They are, as a matter of fact, a supplement to the institutional churches.

d) In this year 1998, the World Council will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. In the Council's lifetime during the second half of the twentieth century, the world has undergone tremendous changes which have, in turn, brought changes to the World Council itself. Up to the present the number of WCC member churches has almost doubled when compared with those of her founding years, and the merging of some other ecumenical bodies into the World Council has served to enrich the Council's mission and representation. On the other hand, these changes have also brought new difficulties for the World Council with them. For instance, how to keep a balance among programs in Faith and Order, Church and Society and World Mission? In our pursuit of Christian Unity, how shall we take into consideration the interests of the small minority denominations? While acknowledging that Western cultural heritage was nurtured by the Christian faith and also gave the Christian church her cultural countenance, how now, with two thirds of the WCC member churches coming from the developing world, can the WCC make further efforts towards de-westernization, thus creating new opportunities.
for the wider participation of Third World churches (including the expansion of official languages now adopted by the WCC)?

e) Since the 1990s, following the end of the confrontation between the two camps during the Cold War, the World Council has been facing new challenges and it is currently making adjustments in a “Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC,” involving not only its programs but also its institutional set up. My past year in the WCC coincided with this adjustment process, which has enabled me to learn about new possible institutional models of the WCC in the years to come. I trust that, following the series of adjustments being introduced, the WCC will have better coordination among her various clusters to avoid overlapping and duplication; that the World Council will also have more vigour and cohesiveness to steer the “ecumenical ship” forward. On the other hand, even when these adjustments have been made, the WCC will still be confronted with many serious challenges. For instance, while reducing the number of staff is almost inevitable, how will the balance of women and regional representatives be maintained? How can the staff of the World Council be rejuvenated? How can a staff at the World Council be assured whilst at the same time preventing the drain of able personnel from the national churches?

f) Another new challenge for the World Council after the Cold War is the possible tendency towards denominational as well as regional growth. For instance, in Eastern Europe, there is no longer the same need now for the World Council as in the Cold War years. How will it be possible for the Council to build upon itself and mutually trusting relations between itself and the member churches? In this regard, I appreciate very much the efforts of our present General Secretary, Dr. Konrad Raiser, who has made up his mind to visit as many member churches as possible since the beginning of his term. He may well turn out to be the one among all the General Secretaries to have visited the largest number of member churches. In my experience of WCC activities during the past year, I realize that the unique strength of the World Council lies in its broad representation of different churches and regions. The World Council can contribute more to the member churches and consolidate its own position simultaneously by playing a bigger role as a clearing house, encouraging mutual sharing of the ecumenical experiences of the regional churches. (One example in this realm was the invitation for the CCC to share about experiences of the post-denominational church in China at the Faith and Order Commission sessions.)

g) For historical reasons, the Protestants and Catholics in China treat each other like adherents of two different religions. We do not worship together, nor exchange pulpits, nor do we discuss issues of common interest in our church lives. Among members of the two branches of Christianity, there is little communication whatever. Here in the World Council, the joint worship every Monday morning demonstrates the “Visible Unity” cherished in the Ecumenical Movement. Likewise, the numerous projects jointly implemented by different denominations together are very encouraging and challenging to us in China.

h) On the other hand, I must confess that, coming from a post-denominational Chinese church, one cannot help noticing nevertheless the sectarian and denominational lines of demarcation in the ecumenical family, which are perplexing and difficult for one to identify with. Also, I am afraid that any church person from the Third World, without proficiency in the official languages of the World Council and not sufficiently acculturated to the Western lifestyle, would find it difficult to be “at home” in the ecumenical family in Geneva. Consequently, this would make effective interflow of ideas and spiritual, ecclesiastical experience very difficult.

The Christian Unity Movement emerging in China since the turn of this century has always been marked by its contextuality. It was the response of the Chinese church to the dual challenges of perplexing Western denominationalism and the growing self-awareness of the Chinese church in search of her own identity. The pioneers of the early Christian Unity Movement were themselves trained in denominational backgrounds and closely associated with mission boards. Nevertheless, in spite of this, they stood fervently for indigenization and Christian Unity in China, knowing that this is the only way to identify with our own people and lead them into the Christian church. For Chinese Christian leaders, unity and indigenization are intertwined. Today, at the end of the twentieth century, the Chinese church is totally independent, with no institutional affiliation whatsoever with any Western mission boards. Likewise, we see the World Council as the World Council of
Churches, not a continuation of the International Mission Council. This is the basis of the China Christian Council's membership in the World Council, and we in China believe in China - this is our support and contribution to the Ecumenical Movement and the World Council of Churches.

While offering gratitude to our Lord Jesus for being permitted to enter into His grace "that they all may be one," the Church in China is fully aware of her own shortcomings. We know that there is still a long way ahead of us before we could live up to being the church as Christ wanted it to be. In our pilgrimage towards Oneness in Christ, we pray that we would be able to witness more fully to God's love with our sister churches in other parts of the world and learn, at the same time, humbly from the experience of sister churches. We in China would like to see the continuation of the China Ecumenical Formation Program and will give our support to this program whenever possible. So far as I myself am concerned, after returning to China, I shall be teaching "Ecumenism" at the Nanjing Theological Seminary. This course will be the first of its kind ever in the curriculum of theological seminaries in China. Through my teaching process I may be able to continue to learn further about ecumenism and meanwhile transmit whatever little I have learned in the World Council to the younger generation of Christian ministry in China, hoping that the ecumenical consciousness of the Protestant Church in China will gradually be enhanced as time goes on. It is my hope that, through the process of the Ecumenical Formation Program in China, more exchange programs can be provided, especially among the young people who are the future of the church in China.

Fifty years ago, in his address to the First Conference on Faith and Order, Dr. Ting-Fang Lew not only expressed the cry of the Chinese churches for unity, but also expressed their hopes for the Church Universal, saying:

"Finally, the united church should be the church not just for one section of the world but for the entire world."

Now, after half a century, his words are still echoed in the prayerful hearts of Chinese Christians today.

ANS Feature:

Ambitious Plans For New Seminary In Guangzhou

The Pearl River flows through the southern part of the prosperous and thriving city of Guangzhou (Canton) in southern China's Guangdong Province. Just off the banks of the river lies Shamian Island, a place of quiet and peace in contrast to the hustle and bustle across the water. This island, once a foreign concession, now houses many tourists, offices and apartment blocks in the historical villas preserved from the colonial era. The island is also home to Guangdong Union Theological Seminary. In April this year, Eva Lai Woon-Ching of the Amity Foundation's Overseas Coordination Office visited the seminary and talked to the Vice Principal, Rev. Chen Yiu about the running of the seminary and plans for its future.

At present there are 50 students at the Guangdong Union Theological Seminary, over half of whom come from the Chaoshou area of Guangdong Province. Most of the students are from within the province, with a few coming from neighbouring Hainan Island and Guanxi Provinces. Courses run from one to three years, with 16 students graduating from the three-year program this summer.

Next year the seminary plans to recruit a total of 20 new students. All students must be baptized and show a clear sense of calling, must have reached at least Senior Middle School educational level, and must be sponsored by their home churches. The students' home churches guarantee course fees and also provide students with 300 yuan (= US$36 approx.) per month to cover living expenses. Six full-time and 12 part time instructors provide courses in areas such as Old and New Testament Studies, Church History, Chinese Language and Church Music.
At present the Seminary runs on a budget of around 450,000 yuan (=US$ 54,340 approx.) per year to cover its running costs. Income comes primarily from interest earned on the Guangdong Christian Council's Theological Education Fund, and also from individual, church and group donations.

Wu Junbin is in his second year of study at the seminary and will leave to return to his home church in Chaozhou this year. Wu will receive a salary of 300-400 yuan per month (=US$ 36-48 approx.) from his home church to work as an evangelist there. Now in his mid thirties, Wu ran a small business before choosing to enter the Seminary. He represents the eighth generation of Christians within his family and has an uncle who is currently serving as a pastor in Canada.

Next to the present Seminary building on Shamian Island is the Shamian Christian Church. A unique place of worship among the churches in the city, Shamian Christian Church falls directly under the auspices and administration of the Guangdong Provincial Christian Council and not the local Municipal Christian Council. As such, the church is more restricted in its functions than other churches in the city. The church has no full time pastor, with four volunteer pastors from other churches coming to preside over worship. Services and activities at the church are only held on Sundays, with a worship service for around 200 believers followed by a Bible study attended by an average of 100 people. Holy communion is celebrated in the church twice a month. Most of the believers attending the church on the island are from outside the city and currently working in companies in Guangzhou. The church holds baptismal classes two or three times a year according to demand, with over a dozen participants taking part in the last class. Because of its unique status, the church is not authorized to conduct baptisms itself, and candidates go to other churches around the city to receive baptism.

For some time now, the Seminary has wanted to redevelop and expand in order to meet the growing needs for trained church workers throughout the province. However, due to the historical nature of the buildings on Shamian Island, government policy restricts such development. Therefore, the Seminary plans to build a new school building near the city's airport north of the city (see ANS 98.4.8). The new building will be constructed on over 20 hectares of land, and will cost an estimated 20,000,000 yuan (=US$ 2,415,000 approx.). The Seminary has already had pledges of support from churches and church groups in Hong Kong who will donate a new study centre, a chapel and a library to the new campus, as well as help cover construction costs of the Seminary itself.

Once the new Seminary building is completed it will be able to accommodate 200 students and provide three levels of training: one-year elementary courses for village lay workers with low educational levels, a two-year intermediate study program and a four-year bachelor degree program.

ANS Feature:

Translating Faith Into Deeds In The Heart Of Hunan

Visitors to the big cities and tourist resorts of China can often forget that the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population live in varying degrees of poverty in remote rural areas of the countryside. Last month, ANS featured an article on the church situation in Zhangjiajie, one of the typical growing tourist destinations within China at the moment (see ANS 98.5.6). This month, Kim Misun of the Overseas Coordination Office of the Amity Foundation contrasts this with a report on the situation of rural believers within the same province.

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Hunan Province has around 200,000 Christians belonging to 800 registered churches and meeting points. Like most parts of China, most of the believers in Hunan are from rural areas and are typically older women with a low level of education. 32 pastors, 37 seminary graduates and more than 1,000 lay workers look after the needs of the believers within the province. In order to reach out to society in some way, believers in Hunan
founded the Faith And Deeds Foundation in 1990, which currently has ongoing projects in the areas of leprosy prevention and helping hearing-impaired children.

There are 38 leper villages located in the remote mountainous areas of southern Hunan Province. Leprosy spreads easily in these areas due to the humid Hunan weather and also to a lack of basic hygiene awareness among the people in these remote places. The Faith and Deeds Foundation provides food and medicine to each leper village once a year. Medical counselling and treatment via a mobile clinic are also provided by the Foundation.

Similarly, the Foundation seeks to help the 40-50,000 hearing-impaired children under the age of seven within the province. This number of new cases increases by around 2,000 each year. The Foundation helps fund the Hearing and Language Recovery Research Centre (HLRRC) set up in 1988 by the Hunan Association For the Disabled. The Centre has 362 qualified teachers and specialists but for a long time did not have a fixed location. The Faith and Deeds Foundation helped the Centre to find space in a building belonging to the local Catholic Church. More than 400 hearing-impaired children have received training at the Centre since it opened. The children are not taught sign language, as the aim is to encourage the children to speak. According to their research, 80% of hearing-impaired children have weak hearing which can be trained and recovered.

Hunan Bible School works hard to provide preachers and evangelists to meet the needs of the rural believers throughout the province. The school was started in 1917, offering programs in association with Biola University in Los Angeles, California. After 1951, the Bible School was merged with the Taidong Seminary in Shandong Province and later with the Yanjing Seminary in Beijing. The school buildings and facilities were taken over by the Hunan Provincial Government after Liberation but eventually returned to the church to become the offices of the Hunan Christian Council today. In 1981, the provincial government provided the church with funds to buy land for a new school campus and the Bible school was eventually re-opened in 1990. There are now five lecturers and 14 pastors teaching at the school. 137 students have graduated so far and 400 others have completed short-term courses there. A new five-storey building is under construction which will be completed in September this year. It will be able to accommodate 120-160 full-time students on two or three year study programs.

The majority of believers within Hunan are situated in the countryside. Jin Kuang meeting point is located in Wang Cheng county, about an hour's drive from the provincial capital, Changsha, and is typical of the many rural congregations in Hunan. The county has more than 2,000 believers, with only one church, 28 registered meeting points and four unregistered points. The Jin Kuang meeting point had only two members in its early days, with the number now standing at 150. In the past, the meeting point was led by one woman preacher, Wang E, who had to bike 25km every Saturday over rough terrain in order to reach the meeting point on time to preach on Sunday. Now that the number of believers at the meeting point has grown, there are more preachers available and Wang only needs to visit it once a month. Wang would like to devote more time to the church but has to run a small shop with her husband to support her family. She is hoping to be retrained once the provincial Bible School's new building is completed.

Shadi Township meeting point lies in the Yong Ding District in the northwestern corner of the province. The meeting point was reopened in 1986 by just four old ladies, the only meeting point in the area at that time. By 1996 the membership stood at 600, whereupon the local government gave the believers some land for the construction of a church building. Amazingly, within only one month after receiving the land, the church building was completed through the efforts and contributions of all the believers at the meeting point. The church in Shadi now has four branch meeting points, each with 2-300 members and served by four preachers.

A major concern within the church is tackling the crushing poverty in the area. Church records reveal, for example, that on one Sunday in September last year, 102 believers attended worship at one of the meeting points in Shadi, but were only able to contribute a total of 11.9 yuan (=US$ 1.44 approx.) between them to the church offering that week.
**NEWSBRIEFS**

**New Leadership:** As reported in ANS in March, the leadership of the church in remote southwest China’s Guizhou Province has stayed the same for many years. Many of the members are too old or weak to carry out their duties now, and a newly elected leadership body was desperately needed (see ANS 98.3.3). In May, the church concluded a meeting of Christian representatives from throughout the province to elect a new membership to the joint CC/TSPM committee of the province. Eight new members were elected to the provincial Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and nine to the provincial Christian Council. Several members of the new leadership belong to the Miao or Yi national minority groups, reflecting the substantial presence of these groups within the population of the province as a whole.

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**Church Music:** The Chinese Christian Music Working Committee of the China Christian Council held its first ever training class for church music conductors in Shanghai in March and April this year. The classes given by Professors Ma Geshun and Chen Zemin, experts in Church Music, lasted for one month, and were attended by 35 participants from churches around the country.

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**Lay Training:** Wudu County in northern China’s Gansu Province held its first ever lay training course for members of the church responsible for leading worship at the county’s 33 different grassroots meeting points. 44 mostly young and middle-aged church members took part in the one month course, receiving instruction in Old and New Testament knowledge, basic principles of faith, evangelism, Bible exposition and preaching. Participants also learned about the Three-Self movement and current religious laws. Organizers hope that the course can help equip leaders of meeting points to combat the spread of heresy within the county, as well as helping them to manage meeting points better.

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**Obituary:** Vice-President of the China Christian Council, Chairman of the Chongqing Municipal Three-Self Patriotic Association, President of the Chongqing Municipal Christian Council and President of Sichuan Theological College, Pastor Cai Yuesheng, passed away on 5th May in Chongqing Medical College at the age of 74.
Places Mentioned In This Issue Of ANS

1. Beijing
2. Changsha (Hunan)
3. Changzhou (Jiangsu)
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6. Dulong (Yunnan)
7. Guangzhou (Guangdong)
8. Luoyang (Jiangsu)
9. Nanchang (Jiangxi)
10. Nanjing (Jiangsu)
11. Shadi (Hunan)
12. Shanghai
13. Shenyang (Liaoning)
14. Wenzhou (Zhejiang)
15. Wudu (Gansu)
16. Zhangjiajie (Hunan)
17. Zhechuan (Henan)