**ANS Survey**

Hong Kong, October 2000

Dear Reader,

May I take a few minutes of your time to ask how we are doing? At the back of this copy of ANS, you will find a reader survey. With this survey, we hope to obtain a picture of your expectations regarding the Amity News Service. We would like to invite your comments and suggestions so as to make ANS a more valuable source of information for you.

For each original response received, ANS will reward the sender with a beautiful set of colorful Chinese bookmarks. We would greatly appreciate it if you could complete the questionnaire and send it back to us by November 30, 2000. Remember: If you don't reply, others will decide for you!

Let me express my thanks for your supporting the Amity News Service. I hope you will take this opportunity to help us improve ANS.

Yours sincerely,

Katrin Fiedler

ANS editor

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**ANS Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Without The Three Self, There Would Be No Chinese Church Today</td>
<td>2000.9/10.1</td>
<td>p2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Back On 50 Years Of Three Self: Reflections By Bishop Ting</td>
<td>2000.9/10.2</td>
<td>p3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference: How To View The Bible</td>
<td>2000.9/10.3</td>
<td>p4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips On Church Construction</td>
<td>2000.9/10.4</td>
<td>p5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Christianity In China: Money Matters</td>
<td>2000.9/10.5</td>
<td>p6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Limbs, One Body: Local Churches Discuss Building Theology</td>
<td>2000.9/10.6</td>
<td>p7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANS Features:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's Creative Splendor</td>
<td>2000.9/10.7</td>
<td>p8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise God And Follow The Correct Path</td>
<td>2000.9/10.8</td>
<td>p10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary Welcomes Students In Opening Worship Service</td>
<td>2000.9/10.9</td>
<td>p11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Portrait Of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary</td>
<td>2000.9/10.10</td>
<td>p12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Matter Of Intensity</td>
<td>2000.9/10.11</td>
<td>p13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsbriefs</td>
<td>2000.9/10.12</td>
<td>p15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Without The Three Self, There Would Be No Chinese Church Today"

(ANS) In September, the Chinese church celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Proclaimed in September 1950 by Y.T. Wu [Wu Yaozong] and 40 other prominent Protestant church leaders, this movement laid the foundation for subsequent church policy. Since that time, the Chinese Protestant church has based its activities on the three principles of self-propagation, self-administration and self-support. Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, printed Luo Guanzong’s reflections in its September issue. Luo, chairman of the Three Self, assesses the achievements of the movement as follows:

The biggest achievement of the Three Self lies in the liberation of Chinese Christians from foreign domination. Instead of being controlled by foreign churches, they now are in charge of their own affairs. The principle of selfhood is not only in line with biblical teachings, but also is confirmed by church experience throughout history, Luo underlines.

By propagating the slogan "A good Christian is a good citizen", the TSPM has raised the patriotic awareness of Chinese Christians. The Three Self has thus helped to make Christians into good citizens.

Apart from proclaiming the principle of autonomy, the Three Self has also promoted church unity. Instead of being split into numerous different denominations, Chinese Christians are now united in a post-denominational church.

TSPM has not only affected the Christian community itself, but has also helped to create a blend of Christianity Chinese can identify with. Christianity in China is no longer a "foreign religion" (yangjiao), as was the case during previous decades.

The liberation of Chinese Christians from foreign domination has also set up a model for other third world churches and their struggle towards autonomy.

Among foreign mission agencies, the Chinese movement for church autonomy has promoted critical reflections on former missionary practices.

TSPM has also widened the exchange of the Chinese church with churches abroad and has enhanced the church’s participation in the worldwide ecumenical movement.

Finally, Luo notes, the Three Self movement has promoted the adaptation of Christianity to socialism. However, Luo sees this adaptation as still incomplete in many respects.

While TSPM is neither a faith nor a church in itself, it sets the guidelines for running the church well. Therefore, Three Self and the building of the Chinese church are inseparable, Luo concludes. There are four principles the church must
not give up: the principles of autonomy, of love for the country and the church, the promotion of church unity and the ideal of running the church well. If the church follows these "four musts" in its implementation of the Three Self, Chinese Christians will continue to appraise TSPM as they do right now: "Without the Three Self, there would be no Chinese church today."

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2000.9/10.2

Looking Back On 50 Years Of Three-Self: Reflections By Bishop Ting

(ANS) In September of this year, the Chinese Protestant church celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Months before the event, churches all over China already commemorated the anniversary. In order to assess the meaning of the Three Self movement, conferences and seminars were held. The following thoughts are extracts from a conference speech delivered by Bishop K.H. Ting and reprinted in August's edition of Tian Feng.

In his speech, Bishop Ting divides the past 50 years into different phases. The first epoch was marked by the church's struggle for liberation and emancipation. Like the newly-founded People's Republic, the church was trying to free itself from foreign domination. This eventually led to the establishment of the Three-Self principle. It called on the Chinese church to become self-administrating, self-supporting and self-propagating.

This motion for independence was meant as the prerequisite for running the Chinese church well. After the reopening of churches in the early 1980s, "running the church well" attained a new and broader meaning. Given the enormous revival of the church, tasks multiplied. The training of lay persons and pastors, the construction of church buildings, the regaining of church property seized during the Cultural Revolution and the publication of church material were among the most pressing issues. The founding of Christian Councils on different levels of church administration was an outward sign of this new focus on proper management. The Christian Councils are intended to help fulfill the enormous task of "running the church well." The new, broader meaning given to the Three Self movement through the goal of running the church well marks the second phase of the TSPM.
At the heart of running the church well, however, lies theology. According to Bishop Ting, it is not enough to build new church buildings - the theology proclaimed in these buildings also must meet modern requirements. The movement for building Chinese theology marks the beginning of the third phase of TSPM. Its ultimate goal is the creation of a genuinely Chinese theology.

Ting envisions a rich theology for China, a theology that enables believers to give ample testimony of their faith. Adapted to socialism, it will not exclude rationality, and might also prove appealing to intellectuals. Such a theology, Ting hopes, would bring the Chinese church back on the stage of international theology.

As Ting underscores, the aims prevailing in the different phases of the TSPM are mutually supporting and not exclusive. While the focus might shift, all goals must be continually kept in mind. Thus, the current emphasis on building theology is not intended to weaken the emancipation of the Protestant church and its effective administration, but rather relies on them.

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2000.9/10.3

Conference: "How To View The Bible"

(ANS) Did Moses really live to 120 years of age? (cf. Deut. 34: 7) Most Chinese Protestants consider this to be a redundant question. For them, the Bible remains literally true, even though many biblical claims may be hard to accept. Yet, in the wake of the ongoing movement for building theology, church leaders come to recognize that this means the necessity for a new understanding of the Bible.

"Let's hope that in the future, more conferences of similarly high scholarly level will be held." "I believe that this conference will act as a very strong incentive for more Chinese scholarship on interpretation of the Bible." Such positive reactions marked the closing of a conference held in Qingdao from August 7-12, 2000. More than 70 church representatives, among them the CCC and TSPM leadership, had gathered in this northern Chinese port to discuss "The Chinese Church's View Of The Bible." Divided into topical subgroups, participants from bible schools and seminaries all over China aired their views on how to read the Bible in a modern Chinese context.

Studying the Bible from a contemporary perspective creates a dialogue between eternal truths and their contemporary interpretation. As Chen Zemin, vice president of Nanjing Seminary remarked: "The Bible cannot be altered, but our view of it can." While upholding basic biblical truths, Chinese theologians want to shed new light on them. Speakers agreed on the need to respect the authority of the Bible.
and to let the whole Bible speak for itself. A new and correct interpretation of the Bible, achieved under these guiding principles, will promote the formation of Chinese theology, participants hoped.

Scholars reminded the audience that throughout history, different views of the Bible have emerged. They created differing theological traditions and influenced the worldview and values of the Christians involved. Accordingly, one must not blindly follow old patterns of Bible interpretation. Rather, any reading of the Bible has to be accompanied by the question: "Is this way of interpreting the Bible appropriate for our time?"

The task of attaining a new view of the Bible brings up one central problem: How can we adapt our view of the Bible while preserving the essence of Christian faith? A pluralization of Christian thinking does certainly not mean a turn towards a noncommittal, indifferent viewpoint.

In the Bible itself we can find examples of a change in perspective, of an altering of theological viewpoints. The Book of Acts describes how the apostles continued to adapt their theological thinking to the circumstances they encountered during their missionary endeavors. In this sense, the Bible itself calls for a continuous adaptation of theology, Luo Guanzong, head of the Three Self Movement, pointed out.

A special demand came from some of the conference’s female participants. Woman teachers from different Bible schools and seminars called for an interpretation of the Bible that can be accepted from a female perspective.

The lectures given during the conference will be published by the CC/TSPM committee.

2000.9/10.4

Tips On Church Construction

(ANS) The rapid increase of Chinese Protestants has brought along a growing need of church buildings. A large number of churches were destroyed or seized by local governments during the Cultural Revolution. Of the remaining ones, many are too decrepit or just too small to house their congregations. Consequently, numerous pastors see themselves confronted with the task of planning and constructing a new church building. In China, where private ownership and construction of houses is a very recent phenomenon, this can be an overwhelming task. Moreover, architects cannot be expected to be familiar with Christian churches and their requirements. In August’s edition of Tian Feng, Zhu Fangxin gives a few hints on church construction.

Functionality is the main requirement for any church, Zhu explains. Accordingly, functional needs must guide the design of the building. A church is expected to house a great number of people. In this sense, a church building may well resemble a cinema, but other functional needs differ. While dim lighting is
perfectly acceptable for a cinema, it is not appropriate for a church. Protestant believers make use of books during meeting times, and both the sitting equipment and lighting must meet this demand.

Apart from its impracticality, a gigantic, ill-lit church will also cause people to feel oppressed. Natural light is of utmost importance for the human psyche, the author points out. As a general rule, the bigger the church, the bigger the windows need to be, he explains. And does our faith not open new perspectives for us? Do we not strive to overcome old customs? Big windows also reflect this open-minded Christian attitude, Zhu is convinced.

Beauty is the thing all parishioners will find most important when asked about their suggestions for a new church building. Zhu is aware of the fact that for many ordinary Chinese believers, "beauty" equals "Gothic style." Again, the question of proper lighting arises. Therefore, Zhu cautiously reminds his readers that Gothic style went out of fashion in Europe many years ago. Beauty can also be found in other styles, which will probably be more adequate for Protestant needs, the author explains.

The art of constructing a church, Zhu concludes, thus lies in balancing functionality and beauty in just the right way.

2000.9/10.5

Rural Christianity In China: Money Matters

(ANS) In its August issue Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, continues with an assessment of problems and prospects regarding China's rural Christianity. The following article highlights a few examples of the economic poverty afflicting many congregations in the countryside. The author writes under the pseudonym of Nong Pu, "the peasant's servant."

In China's western provinces, a large percentage of the population lives under the official poverty line [of an annual income of 800 Yuan RMB, i.e. US$ 100 approx.]. For many Christian believers, even a simple Bible is hardly affordable. They have to sell a precious chicken in order to raise the 12 Yuan RMB needed for the purchase. As a result of this poverty, many meeting points only have one Bible, which is shared among believers and the preacher. More fortunate Christian communities have one Bible for ten households.

The author then continues to describe how believers in a remote village reacted when a shipment of donated Bibles was announced. The load of Bibles had arrived in the next post office, 30 kilometers away. A group of young believers was sent there to fetch them, while the rest of the congregation was busy preparing a thanksgiving ceremony. Some 2000 people gathered for the thanksgiving worship. Clad in their best traditional dress, ethnic Miao believers gave the service a particularly festive note. This generous gift of Bibles was "like bringing charcoals in snow, as we say in Chinese," Nong Pu recalls.
Not only poverty, but affluence can also pose challenges for Christian communities, Nong Pu continues. Rich Christian communities in the coastal areas are the ones most affected by wealth and business. Busy people slowly come to "skip the Sunday service and alienate themselves from the Lord," the author reports. On the other hand, wealth can be used in numerous wonderful ways to do good. Bestowed by God's grace, money ought to be put to best use for God and society. Given this complexity of money matters, Nong Pu suggests that churches pay more attention to the moral and spiritual questions arising from a life in affluence.

Still, the more pressing problem for most of China's Christian communities is certainly poverty. Nong Pu quotes a letter from a rural evangelist who received a substantial donation of 200 Yuan RMB. What did the evangelist use this donation for? He bought a study Bible, a Bible dictionary and a powerful torch with batteries for his long walks to believers. The rest of the money was used for his children's tuition fees.

The need for more and bigger church buildings contributes to the economic hardship encountered by many rural congregations. Inspired by an impressive church in a neighboring village, many rural congregations start construction projects without securing the financial part of their plans. When the financial burden becomes unbearable, they sometimes have to stop construction and turn to their local CC/TSPM committee for help. The CC/TSPM committee then faces the dilemma of how to deal with these requests. The wish for a new or bigger church building is in most cases justified, the author admits. But he warns congregations not to rely on faith and prayer only for the financial support of their building projects.

2000.9/10.6

Many Limbs, One Body: Local Churches Discuss Building Theology

(ANS) The ongoing movement for building Chinese theology is expanding. More and more local church bodies discuss the issue in seminars and conferences. August's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, reports on conferences in Wenzhou and Chongqing.

In Wenzhou, a three-day retreat from July 12-14 focused on "The building of theology and theological education in the spirit of the TSPM." Contemplating the achievements of the Three-Self movement, participants pointed out the tremendous change that has taken place over the years. In missionary times, "one more Christian" meant "one less Chinese." Today, however, "one more Christian means one more patriotic Chinese." Chinese Christians, who used to be primarily concerned with Bible study and other spiritual matters, have now become active members of society. This has greatly improved the standing of Chinese Christians with their compatriots. However, the inculturation of Christianity into modern-day China is not yet complete, several church workers pointed out. They referred to the problem of reconciling Christianity with certain aspects of Chinese culture, like the image of the dragon. The dragon, a lucky symbol in Chinese culture, is regarded an incorporation of the devil by many Chinese Christians.
The Chongqing CC/TSPM committee devoted four days to the topic of "TSPM and building theology." Among the 73 participants were high-ranking church representatives and officials from different Religious Affairs Bureaus. A declaration to "Enhance The Building Of Theology" was produced. Besides, the conference established a working group dedicated to this aim.

Through lectures and discussions, conference participants deepened their understanding of building theology: to develop a new view of the Bible and Christian doctrine while preserving the basic tenets of Christian faith.

ANS Feature:  

2000.9/10.7

God's Creative Splendor

In late September, Amity's Overseas Coordinator, Rev. Ewing W. Carroll, Jr. attended two events in Beijing relating to the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). The first event was an evening of choral and instrumental music, the other, a Thanksgiving Worship celebration at Beijing's Chongmenwen Protestant Church. In the following article, Rev. Carroll shares some personal thoughts and reflections on the anniversary concert.

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On Saturday evening, 23 September, Beijing's CC/TSPM committee co-sponsored "God's Creative Splendor," an evening of Christian music, both choral and instrumental. Performed predominately by Beijing Christians, "Splendor" was a delightful and inspiring mixture of ancient and traditional, Chinese and Western music.

The national CC/TSPM committee had just concluded four days of meetings celebrating the TSPM's 50th Anniversary. The sessions were highlighted by the presentation and discussion of a thirty-page work report, the sending of an "Open Letter to Sister and Brother Christians Throughout China," a meeting in the Great Hall of the People with one of China's Vice-Premiers, and extensive national TV coverage on the origin and developments of the TSPM.

"Splendor" was a highly successful effort to express unity among Chinese Protestant Christians, enable Christians to witness through music to the wider Chinese society, and give thanks to God for the continued development of Christian faith in contemporary Chinese society.

Nearly three hundred persons, from a dozen choirs, mostly from local Beijing Protestant churches, planned, practiced and performed together a wide diversity of music to affirm God's creative splendor. It was also clear that "Splendor" was a statement of thanksgiving to God for the TSPM's fifty years of development. The ability of Beijing's churches to work together in co-sponsoring such an event, was in itself a sign of growing unity and cooperation.
"Splendor" began and ended with the Chinese national anthem. Some observers might find this discomfiting. However, recalling the pre-Liberation years of foreign domination by both Catholics and Protestants throughout China, I felt a sense of justice and gratitude to see Chinese Christians proudly affirming both faith and nation.

An opening medley of songs was performed by choirs from Beijing's Chongmenwen and Stone Tiles churches, the Yenjing Theological Seminary choir and the combined Beijing CCC/TSPM Choir. Like many Chinese musical concerts, the medley included a song about the mighty Yangtze River. Other selections were "God's Creative Splendor," "Fount of Praise," "Praise Yahweh" and the world-wide popular "Holy City."

A second selection of well-known Western Gospel hymns, played on traditional Chinese instruments, was a reminder that while the church in China is proud to no longer be an appendage of Western Christianity, those "golden oldies" like "What a friend we have in Jesus" and "Amazing grace" are still central to the musical life of large numbers of Chinese Christians.

A thirteen-member Miao choir from Guizhou Province seemed dwarfed in the huge 2,000 seat auditorium. However, garbed in traditional ethnic dress, their rendition of "Loudly praise Hosanna," a highly popular hymn among Miao Christians in Guizhou's Weining, vividly reminded the audience that Christianity in China includes a wide diversity of ethnic, language and cultural backgrounds.

The highly spirited "I love the Chinese church," sung by three Beijing church choirs, was followed by "May God bless China," performed by Beijing's Zhukou Church choir and "You are my peace," sung by the Stone Tiles Church choir. The solo performance by a Chinese of Korean ancestry of Henry Van Dyke's "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" sung to the tune of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" was a genuine crowd pleaser. In fact, the audience's continuous rhythmic clapping nearly drowned out this masterpiece.

In addition to other solo performances, choirs from Beijing's YMCA/YWCA and Haidian Church rounded out an unforgettable evening. The grand finale, Händel's "Hallelujah Chorus" sung by the combined choirs of nearly 300 people, again vividly brought to life the splendor of God's glorious creation.

Following the performance, a Chinese friend sitting next to me said, "Don't forget, both the China Christian Council and the TSPM are also part of God's creation." Condemned and mistrusted by some people inside and outside China, frequently tagged "the official church" or "the government-controlled church," and clearly fraught with problems and difficulties, some of their own making, both are human constructs of God's ongoing creation.

Except for the musical director, all of the 300 people who so richly and devotedly sang and performed praises to God that night were volunteers. They reflect a wide slice of Chinese society. There were bankers, students, teachers, housewives, store clerks, shopkeepers, government workers, business executives,
salespersons and countless others. To cast verbal stones of mistrust upon their faith in Christ, the church in China and their patriotism appears demeaning, disheartening and unwarranted.

ANS Feature:

Praise God And Follow The Correct Path

In late September, Amity's Overseas Coordinator, Rev. Ewing W. Carroll, Jr. attended the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement in Beijing. Celebrations concluded with a Thanksgiving Worship at Beijing's Chongwenmen Protestant Church. The following article gives Rev. Carroll's personal thoughts and reflections on the service.

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Sunday morning, 24 September, over 3,000 believers packed Beijing's Chongwenmen Protestant Church for a Thanksgiving worship celebration of the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement's 50th anniversary. Those fortunate enough to have a seat in the main sanctuary were either honored guests or local believers who had arrived at least an hour before the service began. The others were crowded in the church's 500-seat basement or stood and sat in the church's front courtyard. Typical of most churches across China, the service was preceded by thirty minutes practice of the hymns to be sung.

Led by Rev. Wu Wei, Chongwenmen's senior pastor and a mid-1980's graduate of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, the service began with a stirring singing of Martin Rinkart's "Now thank we all our God." This was later followed by the congregational singing of "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord," a fitting reminder that the Three-Self Patriotic Movement is a medium through which the church in China seeks to be faithful to both Christ and country. The closing hymn, "I love the church in China," written and composed by two contemporary Chinese Christians, again reminded the congregation that human structures help the church develop in human terms, but it is Christ who remains as Head of the church.

Rev. Cao Shengjie's sermon, "Praise God and Follow the Correct Path," focused on Paul's words to the Ephesians, "To God be glory in the Church..." (Eph. 3:21) and Psalms 50:23 "To those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God." Both a CCC and TSPM vice president, Cao is also a senior pastor in Shanghai.

Recalling how one of China's Sydney Olympics gold medal winners publicly expressed thanks and appreciation to her coach, Cao underscored our need to daily give thanks to God, especially for the life and witness of the church, and not just the church in China, but the entire Body of Christ. Cao appropriately reminded her listeners that the growth and development of the church in China rests in God's hands. The TSPM has been the means, but not the message of this growth.
Cao noted the Exodus event reflects the weakness of humankind. Like the children of Israel, Christians in China have often been weak and fearful. However, through acknowledging and affirming God's presence, strength and leadership, the church continues to move forward. The phenomenal growth of China's Protestant church from 750,000 in 1949 to at least fifteen million believers today, is clearly a sign of God's presence and the church's attempt to follow the correct path.

Cao concluded her sermon noting "We're Chinese, but we're also Christian." She added, "We must love our country and love Christ, but we must also praise God and serve the people." To do otherwise, Cao said, is to negate the great strides made over the past fifty years.

Rev. Wu Aien, senior pastor of China's largest Korean-language church in the northeastern city of Shenyang, offered a prayer of thanksgiving. Bishop K. H. Ting, now Honorary Chair of the National CCC and TSPM, pronounced the benediction.

ANS Feature:

2000.9/10.9

Seminary Welcomes Students In Opening Worship Service

(ANS) As Nanjing Union Theological Seminary opened its doors for a new year of studies, faculty and students asked for God's support in an opening worship. ANS editor Katrin Fiedler attended the service. This year, 18 women and 13 men will take up undergraduate theological studies at Nanjing seminary. Another batch of 24 newcomers is made up of graduates from other seminaries. These students come to continue their education at China's most prestigious Protestant seminary.

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"On the brink of the 21st century, we look with gratefulness back on the past fifty years of Chinese church life. Ahead of us lies the 50th anniversary of the Three Self Movement. You, the new students, will be serving the church in the 21st century, and we ask for God's grace for your service." With these words, Wang Aiming, professor of systematic theology and acting dean of studies, welcomed the new students in his opening prayer.

The centerpiece of the service, though, was the sermon by seminary president Bishop K.H. Ting. What do Christians believe? Do they believe in ghosts? Bishop Ting asked provocatively at the beginning of his sermon. It is important, he told his audience, to get your basic faith right. He then recalled his time as a student of theology. When he was attending seminary, students had to recite the Apostle's Creed twice daily. For Bishop Ting, this practice clearly is a reminder of the importance of reflecting continually our basic Christian doctrine. Take the idea of an "almighty and benevolent" God. Can God be both at the same time? Or is God maybe none of both? K.H. Ting here turned to the example of the Jewish rabbi who rejected the idea of a benevolent and almighty God. After the atrocities of the Holocaust, the rabbi argued, the idea of an almighty God allowing the holocaust must imply that God cannot be benevolent.
K.H. Ting then continued to outline the importance of exploring theology for seminary students. He reminded the students that, as pastors and evangelists, they will be future church leaders. Theologians should not shut out puzzling questions, but rather deal with them in a productive way. "God wants us to use the brains God gave us," Ting emphasized, and then underlined: "We must not be afraid of unorthodox questions like 'What would have been if Jesus had not been crucified for humanity? Would there have been any hope for us?'"

Ting then returned to the Apostle's Creed. In the Apostle's Creed, we confirm our faith in the "holy catholic church." What does this exactly mean? In the light of the above, this is an acceptance of the richness of theological thinking. We believe in a pluralistic church, where believers live in mutual respect and can accept different points of view, Ting explained.

Bishop Ting admitted that there are church people who disagree with him. These persons fear that dealing with theological questions in an intellectual way is equal to denouncing Christianity as a faith. He instead hopes that seminary students will make use of their intellect under the guiding authority of the Bible.

Does this call for theological reflection carry the danger of turning the students into bookworms? No, Bishop Ting is convinced, a greater danger lies in the habit of not reading and reflecting. "Let's demand from ourselves to become theological intellectuals!" he closed his sermon. "Otherwise the educational level of our church leadership will remain low. The Chinese church needs these intellectuals for building theology! And be assured, intellectual theologians will also be saved!"

ANS Feature: 2000.9/10.10

A Portrait Of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary

Editor's Note: The following text was taken from "Amity Echo", September 2000.

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Nanjing Union Theological Seminary is a Protestant-church-related institution offering professional and academic education for the ministry. It also aims to train theological teachers, research workers as well as Christian writers, musicians and artists. Established in 1952 through the union of 12 theological colleges and schools and later united with Yenjing Union Theological Seminary in 1961, it has trained hundreds of Christian workers who are now serving the church in many provinces. After an interruption during the Cultural Revolution it was reopened in 1981. There are several levels of training. For more regular theological training there is a four-year college for senior middle school graduates, and a graduate program for theological and university graduates, with a total enrolment of 170. There is also a three-year correspondence Bible school with about 4,500 students. The extension department compiles and publishes a bi-monthly "Syllabus" of teach-yourself material for rural and lay church workers, with a distribution of about 55,000 copies.
The publication department publishes a quarterly Nanjing Theological Review and a series of theological textbooks and pamphlets for short term training courses as well as collections of sermons and anthems.

Committed to Biblical truths and preserving historical Christian faith, under the guiding principle of the Three-Selves (self administration, self support, and self propagation), the seminary tries to appropriate positive results of modern Biblical and theological studies in the West and, by integrating with Chinese cultural heritage, seeking to develop a theology that is genuinely Christian with Chinese characteristics for the service of the church in China.

The curriculum consists mainly of disciplines in Biblical, historical and theological studies as well as practical pastoral training, with supplementary courses in the humanities and languages (English, Greek and Hebrew). As regards denominational doctrinal and liturgical differences it adopts a principle of mutual respect and an open, positive attitude, ready to learn and appropriate whatever is helpful to the up-building of the unifying Chinese Church. It also endeavors to strengthen the tie between the seminary and the church and provide various forms of field work. For spiritual nurture there are morning and evening services, weekly fellowships meetings of sharing, and daily private devotional practices. Wide varieties of extracurricular activities are encouraged to promote a balanced growth in spirit, intellect, physique, moral consciousness and social commitment.

In the past years the seminary has sent more than 30 graduates to the U.S.A., Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong for advanced theological studies. Most of them have already come back to teach at this and other seminaries. This program of advanced theological training will be carried out on a more regular basis in the future.

Frequent visits by Christian friends and theologians from other countries provide excellent opportunities for students and faculty to relate to and understand the situations and trends of world Christianity.

ANS Feature:

A Matter Of Intensity

In June of this year, ANS editor Katrin Fiedler set out to experience one week of church life in the countryside. In many ways, this trip was meant as a means to complement well-known facts with first-hand experience. Above all, she wanted to learn more about the routine of a typical countryside pastor: "I know Chinese pastors and evangelists are extremely busy, but why exactly are they so busy?"

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Of course and most importantly, Chinese pastors' extreme "busy-ness" is a matter of quantity. Numerically speaking, there is one pastor for every 10,000 Chinese Protestants. In the case of Rev. Ma, my host in Anhui province, the number of Christians under her care is not as high. But Rev. Ma is the only pastor for the
whole administrative area of Huangshan City, where about 4000 Protestant Christians meet in numerous churches and meeting points. With her own congregation to look after, this leaves her only one or two Sundays a year for many of these outlying congregations. And congregations are growing rapidly, which makes it difficult to get to know everybody and to keep up with new believers.

But the immense workload of Chinese pastors is also a matter of quality, or rather intensity. Thinking back to this week in June, one of the most impressive things was the spiritual hunger of the people I met. At one rural meeting point, Christians persistently begged Rev. Ma for a week of instruction: "Please, please, Rev. Ma, just free yourself for one week and give us a training course," they pleaded. And, indirectly, they also complained about her "short" fifty-minute sermon: "Let's thank Rev. Ma for her sermon, albeit short" the leading elder said before the final prayer. Many rural Christians have a long way to church, on foot, by bike or by bus, and feel they must be rewarded with a long sermon. Besides, a large percentage of countryside Christians are hardly literate. For them, studying the Bible on their own would be painstakingly long or is just impossible. Therefore, the preacher's spoken word remains their main means of instruction and inspiration.

And instruction is a dire necessity for many new believers. Most Chinese Protestants are first-generation Christians, and Christian concepts are alien to them. One woman I met remembered her first impression when she entered a church: seeing the inscription "Yi Ma Nei Li" [the Chinese transliteration of 'Immanuel'] below the cross, she thought this indicated that the church was Rev. Ma's church... While this example of Christian ignorance may evoke smiles, other instances are more problematic. Ma recalls: "I once overheard an elderly women praying: "Oh Lord, my daughter-in-law is so disrespectful and negligent, please let her fall ill." The lengthy and often rather instructive nature of sermons in China is therefore also rooted in the need for Christian teaching. Immense church growth and insufficient knowledge of Christian basics thus add up and contribute to the need for pastors and evangelists. However, the intensity of church life manifests itself not only in the hunger for instruction, but also the fact that Christianity pervades nearly every aspect of believers' lives.

"Sometimes, I regret not having more of a psychological background, more of counseling training," Rev. Ma sighs. The issues she is approached on are certainly broad-ranging, from health issues and faith questions to gambling addiction and problems of mental health. The most ordinary requests are perhaps prayers for the sick. From the small one-year-old boy and his family to bedridden Grandmother Bao, all need Rev. Ma's prayer and support. Many of the Christians we meet have very clear cut priorities: When a relative falls ill, believers will first pray and then call the doctor. For many of them, ill health provided the first encounter with Christianity, and praying still remains the most natural remedy. And, unlike in many Western congregations, Christians here will ask for the pastor's assistance even if the sick person is not dangerously ill. Apart from the deep-rooted faith they reveal, our visits also show how prayers and mutual support help to mold the congregation into the closely knit community it is. And (I cannot help thinking at the end of my week), while many western pastors would not envy Ma her immense workload, they would certainly envy her the liveliness of spiritual and communal life in her congregation.
Conference: The provincial CC/TSPM committee of Zhejiang held its third conference on theological reflection from June 28 to 30, 2000. Led by guest speaker Yan Xiyu from Sichuan seminary, participants studied the following topics: The necessity of building Chinese theology, a short retrospect on the development of Chinese theology in the 20th century, and Bishop K.H. Ting's theological thinking as the essence of Chinese theology since the 1980s. One of the main aims of the seminar was to help participants understand that theological reflection does not endanger basic faith.

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Anniversary: China's Northeastern Seminary commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Three Self Patriotic Movement with a speech competition on June 20, 2000. Twelve competitors representing the student body spoke on topics like "Three Self aims at building the Chinese church well," "With love for the motherland and the church, our country will flourish and our church will blossom" and "For the development of the Chinese church, we must walk the road of the Three Self." First prizes went to Qu Hua and Tao Jiawei.

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Theological Education: On June 30 of this year, Anhui Provincial Seminary celebrated the graduation of its third generation of students trained to be professional church workers. Founded in 1987, Anhui Seminary already produced a number of theological graduates, 17 of whom proceeded to Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. Usually, church workers trained at the seminary return to their home churches and become the backbone of church life at the grassroots level.

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Publication: Yilin Press, publishers of Bishop K.H. Ting's "Love Never Ends", has recently launched a new series of books based on the selected writings of Bishop Ting. Edited by the China Christian Council, selected articles were collected under the following five titles: "On Three Self And Building The Church," "On Building Theology," "On God," "On Christ" and "On the Bible".
1) Qingdao (Shandong)  
2) Nanjing (Jiangsu)  
3) Wenzhou (Zhejiang)  
4) Chongqing  
5) Beijing  
6) Weining (Guizhou)  
7) Shenyang (Liaoning)  
8) Huangshan (Anhui)
ANS Survey: Reader Expectations

1. How did you learn about ANS:
   □ friends
   □ church
   □ job
   □ Internet
   □ The Amity Foundation
   □ other (Please specify) .....................................

2. Do you read ANS:
   □ mainly for private purposes
   □ mainly for job-related purposes

3. Do you have any of the following:
   □ a background in China related issues [e.g. knowledge of Chinese, work with China ...]
   □ a background in church-related issues [e.g. theology, missionary work ...]

4. Regular articles in ANS are usually selected from Tian Feng and then rewritten in English. How do you rate the choice of articles:
   □ very useful
   □ useful
   □ slightly useful
   □ not useful

5. How do you rate the usefulness of the "Newsbriefs" reproduced from Tian Feng:
   □ very useful
   □ useful
   □ slightly useful
   □ not useful

6. How do you rate the length of ANS articles:
   □ too long
   □ just about right
   □ too short

7. Which regional Christian communities would you like to learn more about (Tick all applicable):
   □ urban Christianity in general
   □ rural Christianity in general
   □ coastal areas
   □ far West
   □ Northwest
   □ Northeast
   □ Southwest
   □ central provinces
   suggestions:......................................................................
8. Which of the following topics are you particularly interested in? (Tick all applicable)

☐ religious policy and its implementation
☐ China Christian Council/Three-Self
☐ local churches
☐ lay training classes/theological education
☐ sects and heresies
☐ publications
☐ church music/art
☐ personalities
☐ women
☐ minorities
☐ youth
☐ social services
☐ church finances
☐ statistics
☐ personal testimonies
☐ devotional/spiritual material
☐ Tian Feng’s "Letters to the editor"
☐ other (Please specify) ...........................................

9. If you were the editor of ANS, which of the following would you choose? (Tick all applicable)

☐ more news-service type material
☐ more in-depth reports, features
☐ more stories of human interest
☐ increase frequency (monthly updates)
☐ more background analysis
☐ include pictures
☐ other (Please specify) .................................

10. Do you have any further suggestions, or would you like to elaborate on your choices made above?

Thank you for your cooperation! If you wish to receive your set of bookmarks, please don’t forget to indicate your address: ...............................................................

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