Dear Reader,

"...in the last few years, the Chinese church has become urgently aware of a fourth 'self' that needs work. It is that of a Chinese theological system." These remarks in a recent issue of Spotlight on China capture the spirit with which the Chinese church leadership is currently pursuing "building of theology." While nobody has yet declared any theology as the Chinese theology, the church's "fourth Self", the importance which is currently attached to the pursuit of such a theology is obvious. Underlying the motivations for the construction of a genuinely Chinese theology are also the political implications which accompany the Three-Self movement itself: the need for the church to fit in with the current reality of China's socialist society. However, one thing remains to be seen. As part of the church ecumenical and universal, the Chinese church and its theology can never truly be an isolated entity and, in this sense, no complete "selfhood" can ever really be attained.

The topic of theological construction is thus the focus of this issue of ANS, especially as it features prominently once again in the two latest editions of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council. Despite the huge efforts that are being made to encourage theological debate, progress in developing new theological approaches seems slow. "What Is Theology?" asks Yan Xiyu in his essay reprinted in Tian Feng from the Yanzhong Theological Journal (p2). Jin Wei reports on efforts in Jiangsu and Shanghai to strengthen theological reflection (p5), and Jia Hulin reflects on the implications theological work will have for running the church well (p4). It is the actual process of building theology which is being most widely discussed right now, not so much concrete suggestions for the shape and content such a theology might take. Apart from the beginnings of an outline for a Chinese theology developed by Bishop K.H. Ting in his writings, no other remarkable alternatives have yet emerged - the final shape of this uniquely Chinese theology remains to be seen...

With kind regards from the editorial desk,

[Signature]

Statement On The Recent Terrorist Attacks In The United States

We of the China Christian Council and of the National Christian Three-Self Movement Committee were shocked by the acts of terrorism in New York and Washington and are in deep sympathy for the loved ones of all those who suffer from the catastrophes, the intensity of which we can hardly imagine. May God's hand of healing and consolation be upon them each and everyone.

Terrorism is extending itself in the world of today. We hope churches around the earth will strengthen their witness to Christ, the bringer of God's love and peace, to overcome the evil of terrorism.

Luo Guanzong
Chairman
National Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee

Han Wenzao
President
China Christian Council

Building Theology: Yes, But What Is Theology?

(ANS) How can Chinese Christians consolidate their understanding and experiences of God into a uniquely Chinese theology? How can Chinese Christians build a theology which fits their unique culture and environment? These are the challenges facing the church in China today. In recent times, Chinese Christians such as Bishop K.H. Ting have sought to answer the question "What is theology?" from within a Chinese context. In August's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Yan Xiyu offers his reflections on this question and Bishop Ting's answers to it. Yan's article originally appeared within Yanjing Shenxuezhi, the theological journal published by Beijing's Yanjing Theological Seminary.

Historically, there have been many different answers to the question of what constitutes theology, Yan begins. He suggests that a look at historical definitions of theology can better help us understand Bishop K.H. Ting's definition.

Theology can first of all be understood as a scholarly occupation with God, as the Greek etymology of the word "theology" ("theos" = God and "logos" = science) suggests. Yan points out, however, that this understanding of theology can be problematic: God will always remain too "great" to be understood in a rational, scientific way by human beings. God cannot be reduced to a mere scientific object of observation, as this definition of theology may easily imply.

A second understanding of theology is centered around the interpretation of Scripture. Such an understanding takes the Bible as its focus and serves as a starting point for reflection on questions which Scripture poses to us.
Interpretations and manifestations of Christian faith as it occurs in a particular cultural setting can be said to form another view of theology, writes Yan. According to this understanding, a system of theology must meet two demands: It must transmit Christian truth and it must seek to adapt this truth to the contemporary situation. Theology in this sense connects Christian truth with its surroundings at a certain point in time and space.

How to put Christian faith into practice is another understanding of theology. This view, with its focus on implementing Christian faith, puts a particularly strong emphasis on the holistic nature of Christianity, Yan points out. Christianity needs to be not only in harmony with itself but also with other philosophies and religions.

Having discussed historical understandings of theology, Yan finally presents Bishop K.H. Ting's definition: "Theology is the reflecting church." Yan finds this understanding of theology particularly suited to present-day China. The Chinese church needs to be run well, and one precondition for this is reflection. "Being determines consciousness, and consciousness determines action." For the Chinese church in its current situation, this means that it must reflect actively and consciously, not merely reacting to problems, Yan points out. Today, all too often, church workers in China act like a fire brigade, merely reacting to emergencies, the author explains. According to Yan, the current dearth of theological reflection in China is partially rooted in this reactive attitude within the church.

Yan highlights two aspects of K.H. Ting's definition of theology above. Firstly, it makes the church the subject of theological reflection, thus making theological reflection the task not only of each individual believer but also of the church as a whole. The second aspect is the emphasis on quality of faith. The church cares about the quality of faith of its believers, because a faith that remains un-reflected will also remain shallow.

Any reflection on theology must be firmly based in reality, Yan continues. According to K.H. Ting, the dual reality of shortcomings within the church and good things also existing outside of the church naturally point to the universality of Christ's love, to a "Cosmic Christ". Yan notes that there are some who strongly reject this notion of a "Cosmic Christ" whose love is universal, preferring instead to draw a distinct line between the "holy" and the "secular", the "saved" and the "unsaved". K.H. Ting's thinking centers around the universality of God's love for creation but, as Yan points out, Ting certainly does not abandon the idea of needing to seek redemption. In this sense, K.H. Ting's theology combines both the exclusive idea of individual salvation with the inclusive idea of God's universal love.

Yan goes on to explore the question of contextualization in K.H. Ting's writings. Any theology will carry trace elements of its surrounding environment but in China, an indigenized theology has yet to be developed. K.H. Ting's theology is one possible point of departure for such a theology. Yan goes on to describe his favourable reaction to "Love Never Ends" (Ting's collected writings). As a Chinese, Yan finds K.H. Ting's writings much easier to understand than foreign works steeped in Western notions alien to Chinese believers. Ting immerses his theology in a Chinese setting, which makes it much more accessible for Chinese readers, Yan explains.
According to K.H. Ting, the focus of theology concerns harmony between man and God. Yan points out that K.H. Ting's efforts to develop an indigenous Chinese theology do not stem from a desire to oppose Western theologians. Instead, Ting draws deeply from Chinese reality in order to make Christianity less alien to the Chinese people. As Yan underlines, Ting does not oppose tradition, he builds on tradition. By seeking fresh enlightenment from the Bible, Ting tries to develop a theology adapted to contemporary China. K.H. Ting's theology not only promotes the idea of harmony between human beings and God, it also sees the unity within the Chinese church (as a post-denominational church) as an expression of this harmony.

Building Theology: Essential For Running The Church Well

(ANS) How does strengthening theological reflection contribute towards running the church well? The following thoughts by Jia Hulin from Inner Mongolia were featured in September's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council. Jia highlights six ways in which building theology can benefit both the Chinese church and Chinese society.

Jia begins by pointing out that building theology can help smooth relations between church, society, and government. A theology of love can lead the church down a path of love for country and church, serving God and people. Mentioning Moses, David, Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul as biblical examples of love for one's own people, Jia warns his readers that Chinese people will only understand and accept Christianity if they see that Christians love their country and their people.

Jia urges Christian leaders to guide believers towards love for the nation and the church, and to call on the Party and the government to support church work. According to Jia, the church can play an important role in upgrading people's ethical and cultural values and improving morals and family relations.

The ongoing movement for constructing theology also helps in building a well qualified "theological workforce", Jia continues. Strengthening theological reflection in seminaries and Bible schools will produce better qualified church workers. Correspondingly, strengthening theological reflection requires well trained theologians in the first place. And, as theology moulds both church workers and ordinary believers, a more refined theology percolates its way down to grassroots believers and will ultimately improve the overall quality of faith within the church as a whole.

Interpreting the Bible correctly is a third role Jia sees for building theology. By purging outdated points of view from current theological thinking, ongoing efforts to modernize Chinese theology can help establish a correct and healthy faith. Jia cites cases such as millennial movements, refusing to accept medical treatment, rejection of the material world and comparing the Party and the government with the evil forces mentioned in the Bible as examples of skewed theological thinking which can harm both society and the church.
Such outdated and biased theological thinking can occur even on a day-to-day level. Jia sees the dislike many simple believers have for the dragon symbol as one example. Such believers mistake the dragon in the Bible, a symbol for Satan in the book of Revelation, for the Chinese dragon, a multi-faceted symbol of positive forces in China. Although it can easily be demonstrated that both "dragons" are actually not the same, many Chinese believers destroy household items bearing dragon symbols for fear of being "infected" by evil thinking.

Raising the overall quality of faith among both pastoral workers and believers is therefore the fourth positive aspect of building theology, Jia believes. The dramatic increase in numbers of believers over the past years is not enough, he maintains. Such an increase must be matched by an increase in the quality of faith. A deeper theological foundation will not only improve individual believers' faith lives but will also influence their morals and aspirations in life and their attitude towards society.

Believers with a faith well-grounded in sound theological thinking will also be less prone to fall victim to heretical teachings and sects. This is the fifth element mentioned by Jia in his efforts to underline the positive effects of building theology.

Finally, a theology adapted to contemporary life and society will help the Christian faith to put down roots in Chinese society and enable the church to exist and develop within present-day China's ever changing environment.

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www.amityfoundation.org
to read ANS online and get the latest news on The Amity Foundation

2001.9/10.4

Jiangsu And Shanghai Join Hands In Building Theology

(ANS) Three years ago at the so-called "Jinan Conference" in Shandong Province, the Chinese Protestant Church formally announced its determination to engage in "theological construction". The aim of this movement is the creation of a theology adapted to life in socialist China. Precursors of this movement can be traced back to 1956 when, in a church newly liberated from foreign domination, Chinese Protestants also tried to establish a truly Chinese theology. However, these early efforts were soon abandoned and were not revived until recently.

What has happened since the Ji'nan conference three years ago? On June 6th and 7th 2001, church leaders from Shanghai and Jiangsu met in Shanghai to exchange their experiences concerning the process of building theology. Tian Feng author Jin Wei reports on the discussions among the 150 participants in August's edition of the magazine of the China Christian Council.

Are all material things evil? This was the first question discussed by participants. As An Xinyi from Jiangsu points out, the material world is part of God's creation, a creation God himself judged to be "good". This does not mean that material things carry an inherent "good" or "bad" moral value - they are simply good in the sense of
fulfilling a particular role within the universe. An's moderate view was echoed by Ma Junhong in her analysis of Biblical views of "the world". As she points out, "the world" in the Bible can refer in an objective way to the material world but is also used as a reference to the "worldly", hinting at emotions like physical desire, envy and pride. It is wrong, Ma concludes, to confine "the world" only to this second, negative meaning. Another argument Ma highlights is the idea that people who speak of the "evil world" are often trying to play down their own moral responsibility, for example, when they speak of money as being "evil". The material world in itself does not carry an inherent moral value, such moral judgments are more correctly attributed to human beings and their personal attitudes towards the material world, Ma maintains.

The relationship between believers of the church as a whole vis-a-vis the state and society was a second area of discussion at the June meeting. Yu Jiang, a pastor from Shanghai, divides the relationship between church and society into three different areas: identity, immersion and service. According to his classification, the church needs to "identify" itself with natural expressions of truth, goodness and beauty within society. The second point, "immersion", refers to the church's participation in the promotion of social development. Finally, the church ought to "serve" the masses in the same way Jesus served people.

At the meeting, He Jiemiao from Jiangsu elaborated on the relationship between patriotism and love for the church. Love for country and love for the church are not opposed to each other, they are linked to one another, he points out in his speech. Can a person who does not love his or her own country really be filled with the Holy Spirit? Can we believe that somebody who deliberately harms national unity and stability belongs to the Spirit, He asks.

Participants at the conference continued to discuss the role rational thinking and knowledge plays in our spiritual lives. As Gu Yuntao from Jiangsu underlined, knowledge and rational thinking are not in opposition to faith and can actually foster spiritual growth and church development. Faith needs rational thinking, otherwise, it stays immature, another colleague joined Gu in his argument.

Does the Gospel unite people in peace or divide them? Participants agreed in their positive assessment of the Gospel. As children of God, whether believers or not, all human beings need to promote peace and mutual love.

The fifth topic discussed was the relationship between faith and actions. Faith must be lived out in concrete actions, speakers agreed.

Following the topical discussions, Zhang Keyun, Secretary of the Jiangsu CC/TSPM committee, gave a report on the process of building theology in Jiangsu Province over the past two years. At the provincial level, four discussion meetings were held, and the Jiangsu Provincial CC/TSPM committee received over 300 papers, excerpts from which were presented during meetings and later published. Among the topics discussed were the question of salvation, the nature of the material world, the relationship between church and state and the question of enlightenment. In Jiangsu, a special "Building Theology Room" is currently under construction.
In Shanghai, the initial emphasis in the process of building theology has been on answering the question: Why do we have to engage in building theology in the first place? Work on this question has helped all those involved to overcome some of their doubts and fears, like the fear of possibly eroding the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Lately, Shanghai church circles have been discussing the following topics: Church and society, the local and ecumenical nature of the church, the line between belonging to the Spirit and belonging to the world, etc.

In Shanghai, special attention has been given to the aim of interesting a greater number of people in theological discussions. Cao Shengjie, head of the Shanghai Municipal Christian Council, conceded that this strategy has kept the academic level of relevant publications relatively low but, as she points out, it has at the same time managed to get a larger number of church workers involved in theological debates.

Deeds "Preach" Louder Than Words

(ANS) What are the qualities of a successful preacher? In the last issue of ANS, we presented one view which stressed the importance of a solid grounding in "spiritual knowledge" for evangelists (see ANS 2001.7/8.6). In August's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Zhu Fangxin emphasizes another aspect: the harmony of a preacher's words with his deeds.

"While you may think you preach with words, people will actually judge you by your deeds", Zhu introduces his topic. As a preacher, you are a kind of role model. After stepping down from the pulpit, your congregation will keenly observe whether your behavior in real life matches the teachings you have just promoted.

One particular virtue many evangelists love to promote is modesty. However, as Zhu points out, many evangelists rarely live up to this ideal themselves. He remembers one preacher who, in his yearlong career of preaching, had expounded on the topic of modesty many times. When faced with his fellow parishioners and co-workers, however, he would fail to apply modesty to his own behavior. Afraid of losing face, he would be unwilling to listen to others and would never invite them to share their own opinions.

Such an attitude is completely wrong and ultimately harmful for spreading the Gospel, Zhu Fangxin warns his readers. To begin with, it exposes a preacher's wrong priorities. How can keeping or losing our own face ever be more important than doing God's work well, Zhu asks. On the contrary, openness and a willingness to change on our own part will result in us winning people's hearts and respect.

Zhu mentions that we often say worldly possessions and positions are irrelevant before God, but how often do we act accordingly? In our congregations, we still attach importance to wealth and fame, paying more attention to those believers who have something to "offer" rather than to the more needy members within our churches.
No human being is perfect, Zhu acknowledges, and sin is part of our lives. But if preachers fail to live up to the ideals they preach, this is particularly harmful, as they ought to know better and will be judged by the standards they proclaim. Zhu closes with the hope that more and more preachers will be able to match their words with their deeds so that their sermons will become powerful tools in giving glory to God.

Seeking Truth, Goodness And Beauty Outside Of The Church

(ANS) The majority of China's Protestant Christians are first generation believers. As new converts to a minority religion, many of them are full of the enthusiasm but also the doubts that can riddle young churches. In August's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council, Zhuo Zhuyin from Shanghai explores a question occupying the minds of some more conservative believers: whether truth, goodness and beauty even exist outside of church circles.

Some Chinese Christians are convinced that truth, goodness and beauty do not exist outside of the church, Zhuo Zhuyin explains. For them, art works, religion and philosophy which do not spring from a Christian mind are evil and not inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is not true, Zhuo maintains. Truth, goodness and beauty also exist among unbelievers. He names Chinese hero and model soldier Lei Feng as one example of a non-Christian embodying self-sacrifice and noble ideals.

All humans were created in the image of God. In that sense, all human beings are good, the author continues. God also equipped them with a free will which enables them to do good as well as evil. Zhu enumerates caring for orphans and building schools for the school-less as examples of good works which also help the development of society.

We can see, Zhuo continues, that among non-believers there are many who do good deeds. Though not aware of God, these persons belong to God as good persons and divine creations, and God sees their good works. This, however, should not lead us to the assumption that they are already saved or that they need not be saved.

We must not view truth, goodness and beauty inside the church as different from or even opposed to the same good things outside of the church, Zhuo warns. According to his observations, some believers still harbor wrong notions about where to seek truth, goodness and beauty. Some Chinese Christians do not want to join tour groups, for example, for fear of having to visit "pagan" temples, Zhuo reports. In his opinion, however, temples are also a part of humanity's cultural heritage, they represent human wisdom and creativity. As such, they can also inspire Christians and instill a sense of beauty in them, Zhuo notes, reiterating that Christians are free to visit temples as long as they do not view them as places where God is worshipped.

All human beings are part of God's creation and we ought, therefore, to take them all seriously, Zhuo underlines. Truth, goodness and beauty, no matter where they come from, can always serve as sources of inspiration for Christians. Therefore, we ought to overcome our prejudices and work with those around us in our common quest for
truth, goodness and beauty. Zhuo closes with a thought taken from Albert Schweitzer's writings: Like a sea which may have different names along its coasts, but is made up of the same water, all good things stem from the same source - God.

ANS Feature:

Sichuan Christian Council: Pragmatic and Practical

(ANS) With one hundred million inhabitants and roughly the size of France, Sichuan is China's most populous province. Against this background, the province's 250,000 Protestant Christians form only a tiny minority. However, Sichuan's Christians do not set themselves apart from their fellow Chinese, as Amity's former Overseas Coordinator, Rev. Ewing W. Carroll, Jr., found out during a recent visit to the Provincial capital, Chengdu. Instead, Sichuan's Christians clearly see their lives and witness embedded in contemporary Chinese society.

Sichuan Christian Council is one of the most active and well-organized provincial Christian councils in China. Located in the provincial capital of Chengdu, the council's office is a daily beehive of activity. Its proximity to the Sichuan Theological Seminary and Enguang Church enable Sichuan Christian Council staff to remain in convenient and constant contact with other church leaders.

Headquartered in rented office space in a huge housing complex, the Sichuan CC/TSPM committee provides a wide range of services for Protestant churches in Sichuan Province. While many of the staff travel nearly two-thirds of their working time, they appear both sensitive and committed to assisting with the growth and development of Sichuan Protestantism.

During my three-day visit to the Sichuan Christian Council Office, I experienced a wide variety of events unfolding. A young seminary teacher had just returned from studies in Canada, one seminary couple were preparing to move to the Jinling Theological Seminary in Nanjing, and a layman from another town had come to seek guidance and assistance in construction plans for a new church building. Seminary and Sichuan Christian Council leaders were discussing plans for additional lay training programs. Plans were also underway to receive a large number of visitors from Hong Kong, Macau and abroad, and finally frequent and growing numbers of applications for financial assistance to construct new church buildings were being considered. According to Rev. Wei Kang, director of the office, "Just a normal day for us."

Rev. Wei and several colleagues had just returned from ten days of evangelistic meetings in the countryside. However, he took time to share with me some of the problems and possibilities the Sichuan Christian Council faces in its daily work.

Service to grassroots churches. Rev. Wei said the Sichuan Christian Council's basic purpose is to help develop the worship, witness and service of local congregations throughout the province. This includes establishing Christian communities in large cities and small towns, as well as remote mountainous ethnic minority villages.

During my first morning at the office, Elder Wang Xueyao wanted to share architectural plans for a new church building in his town. Local funding for construction is insufficient and Wang was hoping to receive advice and financial assistance for the project. A retired school teacher, Wang now gives fulltime to plans for the new church building.

A large percentage of Sichuan Protestant communities are comprised of new Christians and new buildings. Rapid growth in numbers and places requires steady response and assistance from the provincial church leadership. In a country where the ratio of ordained clergy to parishioners is 1:10,000, training of lay leaders remains a high priority.
The Sichuan Christian Council works closely with the Sichuan Theological Seminary to design frequent and adequate training programs for aspiring lay church leaders.

Another means through which the Sichuan Christian Council remains in contact with grassroots churches is through its quarterly *Church News*. Recent issues include such items as news about the opening of new churches, ordination of pastors and elders, a personal witness "God's Grace Amidst Difficulty," a report on "Loving Contributions to Re-build our Church," and an article entitled, "Creation of an Evangelist's Self Development."

Relations with Government Agencies and Religious Affairs Bureaus (RAB). "Relations between church and state continue to improve," Professor Hua Qingji pointed out in our conversation. The chair of the Sichuan Provincial TSPM continued: "Until the late 1970's, national and local government's attitude towards religious belief was 'Religion is the opiate of the people.' Following Deng Xiaoping's Open Door Policy, Hua said, government attitude and efforts have drastically improved. Now the focus is on helping implement China's constitutional policy of religious freedom.

According to Rev. Wei, it is vitally important for the Sichuan Christian Council to help educate and inform government and RAB leaders about the strengths of religious freedom. Also, on behalf of local congregations, they need to help RAB officials resolve problems of the restoration of church properties. Wei noted that such practice is highly useful, both for religious believers and the government.

Rev. Wei mentioned one incident where a local RAB official's house burned down. The Sichuan Christian Council immediately donated 1,000 yuan [=US$ 125 approx.] to the family to help in their time of emergency. Not only was the individual official deeply moved and grateful, but other colleagues expressed wonder and amazement over such generosity and concern.

Wei told of his recent experience in leading an evangelistic team to several rural areas. In addition to holding evangelistic services in several churches, the team also spent time visiting local government and RAB officials. Said Wei, "You see, this is how we help pave the way for future development. It's important for local officials to understand, appreciate and approve of religious activity." Wei finds this particularly important in areas where there has been no previous church activity.

While not all RAB officials seek to implement China's policy of religious freedom in the same way, both Hua and Wei expressed appreciation of the growing openness and support of RAB officials in Sichuan.

Church congregations and buildings. As previously indicated, most Sichuan church buildings and believers are relatively new. This means greater need in securing adequate space for the development of buildings as well as nurturing and developing Christian communities.

Lay training is an essential part of this development. Many congregations in remote rural areas are without adequate or trained leaders. Said one leader, "The heart is willing, but the mind lacks experience." Therefore, the Sichuan Christian Council is constantly seeking ways to provide short-term lay training at times and in places convenient to Sichuan's rural believers. Courses have to complement an agricultural economy. Priority is given to when farmers are able to be away from their work. Otherwise, said one church official, "We would be helping to produce new lay leadership with no viable source of income for their daily livelihood."

Sichuan Theological Seminary comprises a fulltime faculty of ten persons, among them Principal Mao Yangsan and Rev. Li Dong, Dean of Studies. Over one hundred students from three provinces in southwest China and the Chongqing Autonomous Region are currently enrolled at the seminary.

Similar to other seminaries, Sichuan Theological Seminary requires all applicants to have been baptized at least one year, be high school graduates, have received a calling from God to active Christian ministry, be approved by their local church and Christian Council, pass a physical examination and pass a Southwest China Christian Council Regional exam on such subjects as language, culture, faith, church history, the catechism and civics.

When asked "What is the purpose and goal of Sichuan Theological Seminary?" Rev. Li Dong replied, "To help prepare young people to engage in a servant ministry. Within a wide diversity of backgrounds, to help our students better understand the Bible, become relevant preachers, help their flock too meet the needs..."
of society and to help them earn the trust of their people."

Principal Mao said, "Our modern society faces many difficulties. We believe Christ is the answer to many of them. On the one hand, we are especially concerned about how to reach a wide spectrum of basically uneducated rural peasants. On the other hand, how to reach, motivate and embrace intellectuals to a relevant faith." He continued, "Today's society faces many problems: empty hearts, unemployment, and lack of safety and security, to mention but a few. Our task is to help fill this void."

One teacher noted, "One major challenge is how to encourage our students not to 'eat every word of the teacher.'" She continued, "We face new times and new opportunities. We simply cannot return to old, traditional methods of studying and teaching."

Pragmatic and practical. Pre-1949 liberation Protestant Christianity in Sichuan was heavily influenced by missionaries from the China Inland Mission, low-church Australian and British Anglicans, United Church of Canada and American Methodists. Today, many individual Christians and church organizations from abroad are again eager to assist in developing Christianity in Sichuan. However, the Sichuan Christian Council tries to balance assistance and involvement from abroad. In the late 1990s the Sichuan Christian Council passed a resolution stating, "In the construction of new church buildings, we should follow the practice of 'Self reliance first, outside help second'."

Prof. Hua and other Christian Council leaders strongly affirm a post-denominational church, with more and more indigenous Chinese. They also think that churches outside China should be more sensitive and willing to learn from the Chinese experience. Hua believes Christians within China should be more positive and assertive about the uniqueness of their faith in modern day China. While Sichuan Christian Council leaders believe the fundamentals of their faith are unmovable, they also believe they must be in step with the times.

On a final note, Hua spoke with firm conviction, "Our approach to the development of Christianity in Sichuan is both pragmatic and practical. But, you see, it pays off!" Hua encourages faster and greater participation by younger church leaders. He also promotes and seems to practice a flexible approach to resolve difficulties. Hua noted, "Remember, we live within a system of long-held and cherished beliefs, customs and traditions. Nothing changes overnight. However, we are strongly optimistic. We choose to do nothing through force, rather through education and patient training."

2001.9/10.8

Newsbriefs

Patriotic Education: From May 10 to June 2 of this year, the central United Front and national Religious Affairs Bureau jointly organized a study class for young and middle-aged Christian patriots. The class, which drew participants from all over China, was organized into four parts. The first part covered patriotism and policy laws and regulations. It was followed by lectures regarding the theory underlying religious patriotic associations. The third part dealt with patriotic education, and the last part of the study class consisted of academic discussions. Among the lecturers who shared their personal views and experiences on patriotism and the church were TSPM head Luo Guanzong and Bishop K.H. Ting.

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Publication: "The Theory Of Building Socialism With Chinese Characteristics" is the title of a book published by the national Religious Affairs Bureau. The publication is the first textbook for political education at religious institutes. Produced by the "Religious Cultures Publishing House" (Zongjiiao Wenhua Chubanshe), the book is expected to "help theology students establish correct political views, raise their political awareness, help them understand the situation of the Chinese nation and form common ideals for the building of socialism with Chinese characteristics."
Places Mentioned In this Issue Of ANS

1) Shanghai
3) Nanjing (Jiangsu)

2) Chengdu (Sichuan)