Dear Reader,

blessings in this season of advent! What does ANS' final edition of this year hold for you?

We continue our look at the new church leadership, as its work takes shape, with an interview of Chen Meilin. Turn to p3 to find out more about the Overseas Relations Department and its plans for ecumenical contacts. The first official church visit from a top delegation took place in November and led the group to Hong Kong. We will report about this visit in our next issue.

Another important event in November was the 50th anniversary of China's premier Protestant seminary, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. Theresa Carino attended the celebrations and reports for ANS on p2. On another note and earlier this summer, China's seminary leaders got together to discuss the ongoing process of theological reconstruction (p5). For a grassroots perspective on the need to strengthen theological reflection, read Li Renyou's article on p6.

Books are, of course, one important medium in the Chinese church's pursuit of theological renewal. In this issue of ANS, we offer a book review of Bishop K.H. Ting's A Chinese Contribution to Ecumenical Theology by Feliciano Carino, former head of the Christian Conference of Asia (p12). And finally, we take you into a private-run Christian bookshop in Hangzhou (p10).

With kind regards from the editorial desk,

Blain Frieze

Dear Reader,

enclosed with this copy of ANS you find a renewal form for your subscription to the printed version of ANS. Please check your subscription status and submit your renewal form to us if necessary. Thank you!
Jinling Homecoming: Celebrating 50 Years

Theresa Carino, head of the Amity Foundation's Hong Kong Office, reports here on the celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, held on October 31 and November 1, 2002 in Nanjing. Nanjing Union Theological Seminary is also known as Jinling Seminary (NUTS).

Sunlight filtering in through the windows warmed the cold morning air at the Jinling Seminary chapel as more than 400 alumni and 35 guests from Hong Kong and overseas joined hundreds of faculty, students and church leaders at a special thanksgiving service on November 1 to celebrate Jinling's 50th Anniversary. As their beautifully blended voices rose in unison, the 40-strong, newly formed Jinling choir lifted the spirits of all those present with hymns of praise and thanksgiving. In his sermon on "Fullness and Emptiness", Presbytery Ji Jianhong, Chair of the National TSPM and Executive Vice-President of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NUTS) expressed the feelings of many of those gathered: "In the past 50 years, we have not only seen but also experienced God's abundant grace. Though we once went through difficulties and endured hardship, the fullness of God has always been present with us during these years."

The crowd spilled over into the grounds of the campus, which had been spruced up for the occasion. Alumni had travelled from different corners of China and from overseas to take part in the largest homecoming ever celebrated by the seminary since its establishment in 1952. They came, both young and old (the oldest was 92), from as far apart as Lanzhou in Northwest China, and Auckland, New Zealand. Some, who had returned from overseas, had not been back in Nanjing in more than 30 years. There was an air of excitement as they revisited their alma mater, squeals of delight in the rediscovery of long lost friends, stories exchanged.

The impressive gathering bore testimony to the impact Nanjing Seminary has had over church life in China, over the last half a century. Many of those gathered are now in key positions in the Chinese church from the national level down to the grassroots. They are church leaders, pastors, evangelists, teachers and social workers. Eight of those gathered had returned from the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong, where they currently work with local Chinese congregations or are engaged in church-related social service organizations.

Expanding and raising standards
A: the formal opening ceremony the previous day, held at the imposing Great Hall of the People in Nanjing, Bishop K.H. Ting, who has been president of the seminary since its founding, had proudly announced NUTS' expansion plans. Over the next five years, a new campus will be developed on a 200 mu (roughly 13.3 hectare) lot in the suburbs of Nanjing to accommodate 500 to 1,000 students. The old buildings, which have been officially designated "heritage buildings", will be preserved in the old campus.

In his welcome speech, Bishop Ting had briefly highlighted some of the current achievements and thrusts of Jinling. The premier institution for Protestant theological education in China, NUTS presently has 158 students from 24 provinces, of which 29 are graduate students. Efforts to raise standards have made significant progress in recent years and an increasing number of new enrollees hold degrees from other universities. As in key universities in China, Jinling Seminary students are now required to pass a high level of English before they can graduate.

Commenting on the efforts at theological reconstruction, Bishop Ting clarified that it was necessary to adapt theological thinking to social changes. The intention is not to change basic doctrines but to explain them better.

In her speech at the opening ceremony, Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, touched on the history of the merger of 12 seminaries in Eastern China that had laid the foundation for Jinling Seminary. In this respect, the conference on theological education held at Huadong Seminary in 1952, when the merger was decided, was a
watershed in church history in China. Today, despite having undergone enormous difficulties and setbacks, there are 18 seminaries and Bible Schools in China.

Remembering the past, envisioning the future
At a symposium held to commemorate the occasion, Bishop Ting paid tribute to Y.T. Wu [Wu Yaozong] for his pivotal role in the move to establish Nanjing Seminary through the merger. When missionaries were sent home in the early 1950s, some Christians felt the seminaries would have to close, especially when funding was cut off. Y.T. Wu believed that merging the seminaries would be a step towards developing self-reliance. Without his vision, Jinling Seminary could not have been preserved through the years of change and upheaval. Ting also acknowledged the role of Luo Zhufeng, a director of the Religious Affairs Bureau working with the seminary. Although a communist, he had an open attitude to the question of religion and protected the seminary through difficult times.

During the symposium, Rev. Chen Yiu, Vice principal of Guangdong Union Theological Seminary and Vice-Director of the Commission on Theological Education, elaborated on the content of seminary education in China. He noted that although Chinese seminaries have been producing pastors and evangelists since the 1980s, they should also aim to produce theologians. Theological reconstruction is an effort to train people to engage in theological thinking.

Acknowledging that women students are increasing in number, he stressed the necessity to build new facilities suited to their needs. He touched on the importance of providing training in pastoral care and counselling for seminary students. To raise standards, there are plans to send students overseas for training and to invite faculty from overseas to teach.

Professor Luo Weihong, Vice-Director of the Institute of Religion, Academy of Social Sciences in Shanghai, expounded on "The characteristics of heretical sects in China" while Dr. Wang Xuefu, presently on the faculty of Jinling seminary, spoke on "Pastoral care and psychological counselling". An '87 graduate of Jinling, Wang trained overseas in psychological counselling. Xu Shaohong, Associate General Secretary of the Shaanxi Provincial Christian Council and Dean of the Shaanxi Bible School, spoke on "Factors affecting theological reconstruction". Emphasizing that theological construction is part of running the church well, he identified several factors that necessitate theological rethinking in the Chinese church: modernization and the need to adapt to social changes, the persistence of superstitions and pantheism, which are strong elements in Chinese folk religions, and finally conservative fundamentalism - inherited from former missionaries but still existing in China.

To showcase the cultural aspects of seminary education, alumni and other guests were given a musical treat in the evening, when the Jinling choir took centre stage. Consisting mainly of students, the 40-member choir gave a superb performance that covered classical anthems, Chinese folk songs and modern hymns. The hymns of celebration and thanksgiving resonated through the Great Hall of the People. In another medium, He Qi, faculty of Jinling and artist-in-residence, expressed the theme of the celebration in his stained glass mural that covered one wall of the lobby at the seminary library: it was a depiction of the resurrection.

ANS Feature

2002.11/12.2

Celebrating Diversity, Building Friendships: Chen Meilin On Overseas Relations

Chen Meilin is the Executive Associate General Secretary of the China Christian Council, Director of the Department of Overseas Relations and Director of the Shanghai Office of the National CCC/CTSPM committee. Theresa Carino, head of the Amity Foundation's Hong Kong office, had the opportunity to speak with her about plans for the Overseas Relations Department.

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What are your plans for the Overseas Relations Department of the CCC?

The lack of proficiency in English is the biggest challenge to developing overseas relations for the CCC/TSPM. English is a vital communication tool, and one of the first things the Department of Overseas Relations has done is to send 19 people, consisting of seminary faculty and provincial Christian council leaders to the US for further training in conversational English this summer. We hope to organize more English training classes next summer. This project shows our determination to address the problem.

It should be noted that the first conference conducted by the CCC/TSPM since the Seventh National Chinese Christian Conference was a meeting on Overseas Relations held on July 30th, 2002 in Shanghai. More than 50 participants from all over China attended, representing personnel involved in overseas relations from provincial and municipal Christian councils. The establishment of this new department indicates the significance we are giving to overseas relations. This is something we need to strengthen.

In the area of overseas relations, both Bishop K.H. Ting and other senior Christian leaders have left us a treasured heritage. There are many opportunities before us. Much goodwill has been expressed by both old and new friends, and we have received numerous invitations to visit churches overseas. Many individuals and organizations have expressed their wish to visit with the CCC/TSPM in China.

We are also faced with quite a few challenges. Some missionary groups are coming in on their own. This is not very helpful to the church in China as some want to re-establish their own denominations and meet denominational needs. The TSPM does not intend to isolate the churches in China. It simply wants to establish the principle that mutual respect in relationships is fundamental and requires transparency. In my visit to Indonesia, I have discovered that the churches there are more indigenized. In comparison, Chinese churches are still very Western in forms of worship, music and theology. We need to do more. God created a world full of diversity - we should celebrate this and appreciate the church in different contexts.

Faced with many opportunities and challenges, we feel we should not only preserve old friendships but expand them and make new ones. At the same time, as we develop a new image, we should maintain our principles. Ties should be based on mutual equality and friendship. To improve the quality of overseas exchanges and to inform our friends well on the theme of theological reconstruction in China should be considered as our top agenda.

In the near future, there are plans to visit Hong Kong and Europe. In these trips, we hope to dialogue with our friends and introduce new efforts at theological thinking and reconstruction. We need to cultivate better understanding, so we can all work together, sharing in God's work.

Can you tell us a little more about yourself and your work with the CCC?

I have been working with the CCC for the last 21 years, starting soon after it was established in 1981. Prior to that I had taught in a high school after graduating from the East China Normal University. I loved teaching and some of my students still keep in touch with me.

In 1994, I attended a course at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, where I received some theological training. Now I am attending a course on theology at the Nanjing Union Seminary. [Editor's note: Chen Mei Lin graduated from the course at the end of September 2002 with 29 other lay leaders and pastors of the CCC/TSPM.] I occasionally preach at the Community Church in Shanghai.

I was baptized by Bishop Shen Yifan at the Community Church in Shanghai in 1983 after converting to Christianity. My parents were musicians and my father was a composer of Peking Opera. I enjoyed a "golden" childhood but when the Cultural Revolution began, I was sent to Heilongjiang in Northeast China at the age of 16 for "re-education". The freezing weather and extremely difficult living conditions made me feel as if light had turned to darkness. However, from another angle, one could say it was a good experience in that it taught me to value the "personal" in life. My parents came under a lot of pressure and my father died during the Cultural Revolution. Our neighbours, who were Christians, comforted us over the loss. This first encounter with Christians sparked an interest to learn more about Christianity. Even though I had no
understanding then of what prayer meant, they prayed for us. A seed was planted in my heart.

During my "re-education" in Heilongjiang, my parents were able to smuggle books to me so that I could continue to study secretly, in solitude. After seven years, I returned to Shanghai where I was admitted to East China Normal University. I majored in history and taught after graduation.

When the churches were reopened, our neighbours brought me to the Community Church where I met the late Bishop Shen Yifan. He helped me very much and explained that the church was in need of young people. I became more and more involved as a layperson. I remember Bishop Shen saying it was not enough to attend worship but that we should be servants of the church. It put me in a dilemma since I loved teaching. But God had given me a new life and I decided to dedicate my life to God. I decided to leave my teaching job and joined the China Christian Council in 1981, soon after the 3rd National Christian Conference.

The first turning point in my life was my experience during the Cultural Revolution. In retrospect, that difficult period in my life also created for me a new life. The second turning point came when I decided to be involved in God's ministry. Some of my attitudes have been influenced by the Cultural Revolution period. As a result of it, I became more self-confident and strengthened. Now I feel I can overcome new challenges with God's help and guidance. Once, I brought my daughter to Heilongjiang to let her know what my life was like during that period. My daughter was baptized two months ago while I was in Beijing.

2002.11/12.3

Reconstructing Theology: Seminary Leaders Speak Out

(ANS) Forty representatives from theological seminaries and Bible schools all over China met in late August of 2002 to discuss ways and possibilities of strengthening theological reflection and research in China. The meeting, joining faculty from China's 18 major Protestant theological institutions, was held in Nanjing. Wang Rongwei reports for Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council and National TSPM.

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In his opening speech, Bishop K.H. Ting, president of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and chairman of the working group on theological reconstruction, expressed his hope that seminaries and Bible schools would be more than institutions to train church workers. "It is not enough for seminaries and Bible schools to train church personnel. They [the graduates] should also have the sharpness of theologians and engage in theological research."

Wang Aiming, vice president of Nanjing Seminary, made concrete suggestions on how to achieve this aim. Suggested means to serve the need of theological reflection were: to strengthen the curriculum, to include an interview into the recruiting process for seminary candidates, to let impulses from theological research go into undergraduate teaching, to uphold guided teaching as the main way of teaching, while at the same time try to accommodate reasonable requests from the students' side.

Kan Baoping, vice president of Yanjing Theological Seminary in Beijing, emphasized the need to raise the level of specialization among pastors, so that they are capable of engaging in the reconstruction of theology. Young pastors need to be encouraged to publish related teaching materials that match the progress of contemporary society. Finally, the foreign language skills of students should be upgraded.
Chen Yiliu, vice president of Guangdong Union Theological Seminary, underlined the importance attached to building theology from seminary staff on all levels. "We emphasize the performance, and not attitude, of our young pastors, and pay special attention to building our teaching staff." Given the seminary's situation in one of China's developed coastal areas, the school is raising students' awareness for reconstructing theology through the curriculum and also the seminary journal.

Similar efforts are being made at other seminaries, as the remarks from faculty from other institutions showed. "Our approach is to raise the awareness of the responsible staff first, and the whole student and faculty body later," An Xinyi, principal of Jiangsu Vocational Bible School, explained.

Through exchange and discussion, the meeting gave participants a sense of direction for future development regarding the reconstruction of theology.

In his speech "A Few Suggestions on the Ongoing Promotion Of Reconstructing Theology ", Presbyter Ji Jianhong underlined: "While the reconstruction of theology and theological education are not the same, they are closely related to each other. They build, complement and nurture each other." If theological thinking is correct, theological education will also follow the right path, Ji said, adding that the quality of theological education plays a central role for the building of the church. Theological education influences the spiritual needs of believers, and also decides whether Christianity can adapt to socialist society. In short, theological education can decide whether Christianity can exist and develop in socialist society.

Presbyter Ji continued with a situational analysis of seminaries and Bible schools that are currently engaging in the reconstruction of theology. Ji advised all those occupied with building theology to choose related topics well and strengthen the planned character of their efforts. At the same time, Ji expressed his hope that principles and policies would be observed, and that discussions would be kept within boundaries without escalating into a war between theological schools. Finally, Ji said the church should rely on its own strength and not be dependant on foreign theological thinking.

Discussion meetings in working groups complemented the presentations given by school representatives, Bishop Ting and Presbyter Ji.

2002.11/12.4

Why We Need To Strengthen Theological Reflection: A Grassroots Perspective

(ANS) For a number of years now, the Chinese church has been making conscious efforts to strengthen theological reflection within its rows. Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council and National TSPM, often portrays this need for theological reconstruction from the perspective of those mostly involved in this process: church leaders and teachers from theological institutions. In the report below, Li Renyou from Anhui Province offers a grassroots perspective on the need to educate ordinary believers regarding their faith, and to bring their convictions in line with China's increasingly modern society.

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Eighty percent of China's Protestant Christians live in the countryside. Many ordinary believers, but also evangelists have only little education and are still influenced by China's feudal heritage. As a result, many believers merely replace their traditional protective idols with Jesus Christ, and their thinking remains deeply embedded in traditional ideas.

In some places, rather than starting by explaining the basic faith or assessing new believers' family background or personalities, the first thing some evangelists do is to go into the convert's home to cleanse it of all so-called idols.

There was a sick woman who started to believe in Jesus Christ because of her illness. The evangelists had told her that if she had faith, her illness would be cured. One day, when her husband was out, the evangelist came and brought a few fellow Christians along. Together, they first told the sick woman to admit her sins; then, they cleaned her house. A week later, the patient complained to the evangelist that the illness had not vanished yet. Again, the evangelist came with a few friends and searched the house thoroughly. Finally, he spotted a piece of wood carving on a table, and a traditional dragon and phoenix image on the entrance wall. Like Columbus who had just discovered a new continent, he exclaimed: "Finally we have got the root of the sin!" Just as the group was merrily tackling the table, the woman's husband came back...

Once, when I went to the mountains, a local peasant asked for my opinion on a theological problem that was obviously bothering him and other local believers: "Our local evangelist doesn't want us to go to the temple fair, he says God doesn't like it. But our area here is very remote, the next town is very far away and there are many things that we used to buy at the temple fair." I told him that Paul admonishes us to do everything relying on our faith, and that with this attitude it was acceptable to go to the temple fair. Subsequently, I accompanied this peasant on his horse cart to the fair, where he bought a number of household items and tools. The big smile on his face reminded me of how the lack of theological education sometimes confronts people with unnecessary dilemmas. For me, the conclusion of this episode was: the true Gospel liberates people, false teachings tie them up.

These past few years, many rural churches face the problem of non-local evangelists who come in twos and threes to "snatch" fervent, but uneducated believers from existing congregations and set up their own meetings. These groups meet in suspect places, teach the imminent coming of Christ, call on believers to give up all material things, warn them not to read Tian Feng or any other official church publications, and engage in unusual practices of wild dancing, exaggerated fasting and so on in their "healing reunions" and "Spirit meetings". One elderly woman was nearly brought to death through excessive fasting in a "fasting and prayer" meeting. In other incidents, parents were told not to bury their children but pray for their resurrection instead; or children were kept from attending school and put through "real, spiritual" courses.

Such incidents show the real danger posed to the church through sectarian movements, but also the harm caused through remnants of feudal thinking. If we want to guide believers with correct theological thinking and forearm them against
dangers and deceit, theological reconstruction is not an option, but a must for the church in China.

2002.11/12.5

TSPM - A Young Evangelist's Perspective

(ANS) Recently, after reading several articles on the Internet which attack the Chinese Church and its Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), a young evangelist from Shanghai named Xiao Li came to realize that many overseas have misunderstood the nature and aims of this movement in China. Xiao Li writes an article giving his perspectives on the movement in November's issue of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council and National TSPM.

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How can the Chinese Church continue? How can faith in Christ continue to exist in China?

These were the questions facing Chinese believers soon after Liberation and the establishment of a new government and social system in 1949. For over a century before Liberation, Christianity's entry into China had been directly linked to imperialist aggression against China on the part of Western powers. Christianity had relied on the might of imperialist guns, which had forced the Qing dynasty to sign unequal treaties giving missionaries special rights in China, among other concessions. As a result of this, Chinese people formed a very bad impression of Christianity, calling it a "foreigners' religion" (Chinese: yang jiao) and seeing it as inseparable from the aggression and imperialism humiliating China. Even today, U.S. imperialist ambitions still make use of China's religious groups to carry out political agendas harmful to China's stability and interests.

It was precisely in order to protect China and her church from such destructive outside forces, to promote a truly Chinese church free of the damaging associations of its past, that the Three Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China was born in the 1950s.

Today, China's economy is developing rapidly, China has entered the World Trade Organization (WTO), China has successfully bid for the 2008 Olympic Games and also gained entry to the World Cup Finals in Korea and Japan this summer. China is one of the "bright lights" on the world stage now, and relations with other countries are getting closer day by day. One consequence of this is that some overseas denominational mission boards are also gradually returning to China and trying to infiltrate the church here once again. This raises the real threat of denominationalism returning to China, a problem that jeopardizes the Chinese Church's hard-won post-denominational unity and its attempts to construct a contextualized Chinese theology.

The "Three Self Principle" by no means constitutes the "basic faith" of Chinese Christians. Nowhere in the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed do we find mention of a "Three Self Principle". The Three Self Principle is simply a working principle by which the church in China can be run well. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC) also do not claim to be

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"the Church", they are simply bodies which aim to facilitate running the church well. Bishop K.H. Ting once said that, as the Chinese church builds itself up, the CCC and TSPM are like scaffolding. Bishop Ting had a vision of a Chinese church which is run well, which supports itself well and which spreads the message of Christ well, a church which runs according to New Testament principles and which stands with incomparable beauty and glory in the East. When such a church has been constructed, the current "scaffolding" won't be seen any more. But, for now, the scaffolding is needed during the construction process of such a church.

"Three Self" simply means running the church well, supporting the church by ourselves and spreading the Good News of Christ by ourselves to our fellow Chinese. It means rejection of the denominational divisions, control, management and oversight by overseas church bodies. Without the express permission of Chinese church bodies, overseas churches are now not allowed to evangelize, build church buildings or seminaries within China's borders.

"Three Self" is a patriotic movement for Chinese Christians in New China. Nowadays, the Three Self Movement is embarking on a path of promoting the reconstruction of Chinese theological thinking. This does not imply a change of faith but rather a protection and promotion of the five basic tenets of Christian faith - the Trinity, Christ being both human and God, the Virgin Birth, Death and Resurrection and the Second Coming. It is hard to conceive why anyone would object to a movement which promotes such things.

2002.11/12.6

Serving The Community

(ANS) Jin Wei is Acting General Secretary of the YMCAs of China and Vice Chair of the National TSPM Committee. Below, she writes about the newly established Social Service Department of the National CCC/TSPM (See ANS 9/10.3.2002).

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After the Seventh National Chinese Christian Conference, the National CCC/TSPM Committee established a Social Service Department. This carries an important message: In the 21st century, the Chinese church will express its social values in a more pronounced way vis-a-vis this transforming society, and the church will take on the social responsibilities of caring about society and serving the community. We believe that love to the community is the continuation of God's love for us. In living out Christian deeds through social service, more people will come to realize that Christianity spreads truth, good and beauty.

We often ask ourselves, if God already bestowed on us plenty of food, do we still need God to take care of every single day to follow? As a result, we have to implement social justice according to the saying "People say that beautiful things need to be done with care", and we need to be concerned about people's living environment, and help the weaker elements of society all in this spirit. At the same time, while we are serving people, we need to cleanse the moral tendencies of society.

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These past few years, local churches are getting involved in social service and have started initiatives of social concern, like emergency relief, help for school-less children, and showing concern for the weaker groups in society. All of these testimonies are very encouraging for us. Similarly, the ten YMCA's and YWCA's are growing roots in communities and striving to give effective responses to the changing needs of society. This also is a pro-active attitude; we hope that through service, we will implement the biblical teaching of "not use people as servants, but be a servant of the people". Thus, we hope to widen our horizon, combine resources, and bring more blessings onto the Chinese church.

2002.11/12.7

Christian Bookstore Offers Solutions To Faith Puzzles

(ANS) In September this year, Tian Feng reporter Tian Xiao heard about a young Christian man who originally graduated from Zhejiang Medical College but who is now running his own Christian bookstore in the heart of Hangzhou, the popular tourist destination and capital of Zhejiang Province. Tian Xiao decided to make a trip to Hangzhou to find out more about this young believer and his motivation for opening the bookstore. He reports his discoveries in October's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine of the China Christian Council and National TSPM.

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Pan Wenbiao comes from a family boasting four generations of Christian believers. Before opening his bookstore, Pan completed five years of study at Zhejiang Medical College and also a three-year correspondence course at Hangzhou Commercial School. Currently, he is also attending lay training courses at Zhejiang Theological Seminary.

Hangzhou is one of China's most developed city's and also a major tourist attraction. As a result, most of the city's bookstores are more like huge book "supermarkets", as Pan puts it, and concentrate on offerings suitable for general readers and tourists. By way of contrast, Pan's bookstore is small and cozy, situated on a small, quiet side-road in an otherwise busy and bustling neighbourhood near the shores of the famous West Lake. On entering, the customer immediately notices a scroll on a back wall proclaiming "Books are the source of knowledge". The shelves are lined mostly with books on religion and philosophy. Pan runs the store with his wife, Shen Minxia, who graduated from Zhejiang Theological College and also works as an evangelist in the Hangzhou church.

Why did Pan choose to set up his bookstore in this small way and in this particular location? Pan explains: "In the past, this neighbourhood was full of book stalls and tea houses, a place for the literati and scholars to meet and exchange ideas. I was eager to preserve something of this atmosphere, and my bookstore serves as a sharp contrast to the more commercial ventures in this neighbourhood now."

Pan goes on to explain how a lot of thought was put into the setup of his store: "A bookstore is like a 'dance floor' for books, the starting point of a book's life. How you set up your store will determine what kind of people come to you to browse and buy. If you only sell 'trashy' books then you will tend to attract 'trashy' people! The wrong book in the wrong bookstore environment will not fare very well whereas, in the right setting, books will attract the readers they were meant for. Every bookstore has its
own unique style and management which reflects different reading tastes and reading cultures."

Pan’s emphasis on religious and philosophical texts means that most of his customers are either Christians, or scholars researching Christianity, or people just curious about the Christian faith. Some of Pan’s classmates from Zhejiang Theological College also visit his bookstore.

Pan believes that his views about books and bookstores also extend to the Church and its members. In the past, the Chinese Church was only concerned with building itself up - constructing new church buildings and winning huge numbers of converts to fill those buildings. It was thought that a sheer increase in numbers of believers was proof enough that the Gospel was flourishing. However, little attention has been paid to the quality of the Church and the quality of its members’ faith. Even today, the Chinese church still does not possess a systematic body of theological thinking to guide it and ensure this quality, it still relies on the old teachings of Western missionaries from colonial times. These conservative teaching are highly unsuitable for modern times and can actually do damage, Pan says.

Pan gives an example of how such conservative theological thinking can do harm. Through his studies and his insatiable desire for knowledge, Pan has come to know quite a few intellectuals. None of his intellectual friends object to the fact that Pan is a Christian believer. In fact, many have shown themselves willing to attend worship with him. However, Pan has found that, after attending worship, most of his friends vow never to return to church again. The reason is usually due to the message his friends hear from the pulpit. Often, teaching in Pan’s church centres around the big differences between believers and non-believers. Preachers use strong language, saying that only believers are precious whereas non-believers are heading straight to hell. They talk in terms of non-believers being merely "firewood for the fires of hell" and "Satan’s limbs". After attending such services, Pan’s friends ask him whether or not the Bible really says such things or whether Jesus really preached this kind of message.

Such teachings are common in the churches he visits in the area and in his hometown, Pan observes. He says that many people outside the church make comments such as, "Oh, you Christians really have it made - you get to sin away during the day and then you only have to pray at night and believe that your wrongdoings are washed away by Jesus’s blood and you are alright again.” Hence many people outside the church tend to think that Jesus’s blood is some kind of cure-all which allows you to get away with any sin you like.

Pan himself represents a new generation of Chinese Christian, one who has not been "contaminated" by such old-style colonial-era theological thinking. He explains that one of the reasons he is attending theology courses and also why his bookstore specializes in religious books is because he wants to find answers to questions which such conservative preaching raises for him. For example, Pan was disturbed about teachings such as "only believers are worthy since only they are justified by faith" and the reactions of his friends on hearing this. However he found some answers in one of the books in his bookstore, a work by a scholar at the Minorities Research Department of the Southwest China Minorities School, Sun Shanling. Sun
wrote that the doctrine of "justification by faith" was already being questioned during the latter part of Martin Luther's life. Luther concluded towards the end of his life that "love" is more basic than "faith", and that faith without love has little worth and cannot lead to righteousness or justification. Therefore, faith alone does not justify.

Tian Feng reporter Tian Xiao concludes that it is precisely for questioning believers such as Pan Wenbiao that the Chinese Church urgently needs to increase its efforts in constructing a body of theological thinking ideally suited to the modern Chinese situation. As Pan notes, a Church can only produce believers who are as good as the instruction they receive from preachers, ministers and evangelists within the Church. With his bookstore, Pan seeks in his own small way to provide greater access to knowledge and information about faith issues which will ultimately inform the faith understanding of the Chinese Church of the future.

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BOOK REVIEW


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The call for theological renewal or reconstruction in China, which concludes this latest selection of writings by Bishop K. H. Ting, is in fact a note which sounds throughout the other articles in the book. It is a note that is not unfamiliar to ecumenical circles, and one that is most appropriate for a volume put together specifically as a contribution to ecumenical theology. The history of the ecumenical movement has shown how the strength and creativity of ecumenical theology has always resided in its willingness and capacity to assess, review and reconstruct its fundamental character. This task of review and reconstruction occurs in response to new discoveries about the demands of the Gospel, on the one hand, and the pressure of new and changing economic, social and political conditions, on the other. This task has required not only changes in policies and programs but, more importantly, the rethinking and refinement of theological and ethical perspectives and approaches to these policies and programs. The tradition and discipline of ecumenical study has evolved from out of this awareness of the need, at various times, to review and renew theological perceptions of the world and the task of the Church within it. At a time when the whole ecumenical world is going through a critical period of review and assessment, this small but handsome volume of essays, compiled from out of the experience of the Church in a country that has undergone tumultuous changes in its life over the last fifty years, is a most welcome contribution.

Well chosen in terms of thematic range and theological quality, the articles span a period of sixty years from 1940-2000. They exemplify the theological orientations and responses that were drawn by Bishop Ting amidst the incredible zigs and zags of Chinese politics and the equally drastic changes that were happening in the life of the Church. KH, as he is known to colleagues and friends, was already a priest of the Chinese Church when China was engulfed by the brutalities of the Japanese invasion that served as a prelude to the explosion of the Asia Pacific phase of the Second World War. He was a teacher of theology and a Seminary president as
China went through the dislocations of transition from "republican" to "communist" China. He witnessed the intense struggles to improve economic conditions in Chinese society through the "Great Leap Forward" project in the sixties. He experienced the oppressions heaped upon the Church, academic institutions and other sectors of Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution in the seventies. Bishop Ting became President of the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) as both Chinese Church and society reconstituted and redirected themselves after the Cultural Revolution. He shared the expectations and hopes of his people as China launched a process of reform and modernization and began to open itself more widely to the world. In November this year, he presided over the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, where he presented to the large gathering of students, faculty, alumni and friends his hopes for a major effort towards theological reconstruction in China even as the whole nation prepared for the installation of a new generation of leaders that presumably will continue the reforms that have transformed Chinese society into a "global force in every field" over the last few years.

The diversity of themes and modes of presentation in this volume is wide. The selection starts with a meditation about "Reading the Bible at Christmas", written by KH as a young priest in Shanghai at a time when China was suffering under the effects of the war with Japan. Several of the articles are, in fact, meditations and sermons delivered on important occasions, perhaps critical turning points, in the life of the Chinese Church in the past fifty years - for example, at Lambeth Palace and at the Ecumenical Centre of the World Council of Churches in Geneva as contacts with the outside world began to open up in the 80s. Most are theological papers and lectures to national and international audiences, as well as articles published in various journals, in which KH addresses universal theological themes from a clearly Chinese perspective. Some of the themes are familiar; others are new: love and forgiveness, courage and confidence, hope and resurrection, the universality of the Church, ecumenical and evangelical, building up the Body of Christ, creation and redemption, the Cosmic Christ. Of special importance to those who have come to know KH through his work in the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) is the article "On Christian Theism," which was delivered at Nanjing Seminary in 1957 as an "apology" for Christian faith against ultra-leftist tendencies in Chinese Socialism. It was through this article, which was published in Student World, that many in the ecumenical movement, including this reviewer, first "met" KH. The volume ends with KH's "view of these past fifty years" and his call for "theological reconstruction."

Despite the obvious sharpness with which events in China turned, and the difficulties and dislocations these must have created for KH and the Church, the articles are written very gently and always with an eye towards the future building up of the Church. There is nothing in these writings of the strident and bitter rhetoric that often marks the expressions of those who are caught in vital areas of social and political conflict. There is much here of a theologian who is also a pastor, who gives not only theological wisdom but also quiet comfort and confidence amidst stressful times. As in previous collections of writings, KH once again illustrates the point that any good theologian must also be a good Churchperson; he or she must not only love theology but, more importantly, must love the Church. Thus, his call for "theological reconstruction" is not a separate academic exercise but part of the next major phase in the effort to "build and run the Church well" in China.
The introduction by Janice and Philip Wickeri provides very useful biographical and historical background on the life and work of KH and the influences that have shaped his theological work. Also very helpful are the brief notes provided by the editors introducing each of the articles.

Feliciano V. Carino
Hongkong, November 22, 2002

Feliciano V. Carino was formerly the General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia. He is currently an affiliate faculty of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong.

Copies of the book are available from the World Council of Churches, c/o Ms. Linda Ford, WCC Publications Unit. Her e-mail address is lmf@wcc-coe.org. Limited copies are available from the Amity Foundation Hong Kong Office. Send orders to: Helena Chan at amityhk@pacific.net.hk

NEWSBRIEFS

Workshop: From November 5-9, 2002, participants from the CCC and the Amity Foundation got together in Hong Kong to attend a workshop on communication and publicity issues. The workshop, which had been organized by Amity's Hong Kong office, started with exposure visits to church related and development organizations, and continued with introductory sessions on various means of communication. Two of the main facilitators were General Secretary Randy Naylor and Asia Regional Coordinator David Lin of WACC, the World Association for Christian Communication. "We are very grateful for their presence and contributions," Theresa Carino, head of the Amity Foundation Hong Kong office, noted. The workshop was co-organized with WACC. The Hong Kong Christian Council, the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and the Chinese Christian Literature Council were co-sponsors of the meeting. "This workshop has been extremely interesting and helpful," Lin Manhong from the CCC observed after the meeting.

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Overseas Visit: A 14-strong delegation from the National CCC/TSPM visited Hong Kong from November 22 to 26, 2002. Hosted by the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Union, the programme included visits to Hong Kong's major Protestant churches and church-related institutions such as the Lutheran Theological Seminary and the YMCA. Apart from introducing the newly established church leadership to some of its Hong Kong partners, the visit had the purpose of making the ongoing process of theological reconstruction better known to overseas audiences. An open forum on the subject drew a crowd of 300 from a cross section of Hong Kong churches. The delegation was led by Presbyter Ji Jianhong and Rev. Cao Shengjie, leaders of the National TSPM and CCC respectively.

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Chongqing scandal update: In November's edition of Tian Feng, the magazine follows up on the case of Yi Hengming, the Chongqing TSPM representative who had managed to abuse a migrant worker for years without being found out (see ANS 2002. 7/8.3). Following its report, Tian Feng received numerous letters and e-mails congratulating it on its reporting, and enquiring about the outcome of the court hearings. As Tian Feng reports, on September 28 Yi Hengming was sentenced to 13 years of imprisonment. The offender will also lose his political rights for 3 years.

Season's Greetings to all ANS readers from the Overseas Relations Department of the CCC/National TSPM

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours. (Luke 2:14) May God's grace and peace strengthen us in our faith, hope and love at Christmas and always.
Places Mentioned In This Issue Of ANS

1) Nanjing (Jiangsu)
3) Hong Kong
2) Hangzhou (Zhejiang)
4) Chongqing