Dear Reader,

In the past, believers in the Chinese church have not attached much importance to reaching out to those in need around them in wider society, preferring to focus their attention on church affairs and drawing a strict line between "believers" and "unbelievers".

In 2002, the national CCC / TSPM established a "Social Service Department" with the express aim of helping Chinese believers understand the importance of sharing God's love in practical ways with those in need around them. As this issue of ANS demonstrates, times and attitudes are indeed changing. Whether it is a church clinic (p10), autistic children (p12), the deaf and the mute (p13) or even just those who cannot read or write (p14), Chinese believers are getting involved and reaching out to help.

Getting involved also means responding to the issues of the day which affect the wider world. Like many around the world, Christians in China were deeply affected by the devastation caused by the tsunami late last year and rallied round to help where they could (p3). Meanwhile, church leaders have been expressing their support for the peaceful unification of China (p4) and have also been visiting the United States to prepare for bringing last year's Bible exhibition (see ANS 2004.9/10.1) to that country (p2). Finally, Chinese women believers took part in the World Women's Day of Prayer in March (p6).

On a more reflective note, and rounding off this issue of ANS, Bishop KH Ting revisits the question of religion as an opium (p16). We are also including some theological reflections inspired by Bishop Ting's writings in the recently published volume God is Love (p15).

With kind regards from the editorial desk,
TSPM / CCC Delegation Visits Churches In The United States

(ANS) In August 2004, the CCC / TSPM held a "Chinese Church Bible Ministries Exhibition" in Hong Kong, the first time such an event was held outside of mainland China's borders. The exhibition was warmly received and, since last summer, many overseas churches and church organizations have invited the CCC / TSPM to stage a similar exhibition in their countries. In preparation for the Bible exhibition to travel to the United States next year, a delegation from the CCC / TSPM travelled to the U.S. earlier this year. The following details of the visit are taken from April's edition of Tian Feng magazine and also from information supplied by Brenda Lisenby of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF).

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A CCC / TSPM delegation travelled to the United States between 2nd - 26th February 2005 in order to begin preparations for holding a "Chinese Church Bible Ministry Exhibition" there in early 2006. The delegation included Rev. Cao Shengjie (President of the China Christian Council), Ms. Chen Meilin (Executive Associate General Secretary of the China Christian Council and head of the CCC / TSPM Overseas Relations Division) and Rev. Bao Jiayuan (Associate General Secretary of the China Christian Council).

During the visit, delegates travelled to Washington D.C., Charlotte, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Colorado and Atlanta. People they met during the visit included: Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Rev. Billy Graham, Rev. Rick Warren of Saddle Back Church, Dr. Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral, Rev. Richard Cizik (Vice President of the National Association of Evangelicals), the Rt. Rev. Mark Sisk (Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York), Dr. Eugene Habecker (President of the American Bible Society), Bob Edgar (General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA) and the famous tennis player Michael Chang, among others.

While in Washington D.C., Rev. Cao had the opportunity to attend the President's prayer breakfast, and she also preached at St. John's Cathedral while in New York. Delegates were interviewed by Blue Ridge Broadcasting, Choice Magazine and Christianity Today, and paid a visit to the headquarters of The Christian Century in Chicago. In Colorado Springs, delegates attended a two and a half day "Executive Forum on Ministry in China" attended by some 120 representatives from different churches and church organizations across the United States.

During the course of their visit, the CCC / TSPM delegation encountered great enthusiasm concerning the upcoming Bible exhibition. While visiting with Rev. Billy Graham, the famous evangelist commented: "I'm thankful for the news of the exhibition of the Bible that will be brought to the United States. It had a tremendous reception in Hong Kong when it was exhibited there, and I believe it will in the United States too. We certainly are delighted that this is going to take place, and we will be praying for its success."
Believers Demonstrate Compassion For Tsunami Victims

(ANS) The earthquake and subsequent tsunami which occurred in the Indian Ocean on 26th December 2004 left over 200,000 dead and more than one million people homeless. On hearing the news of this tragedy, people all over the world gave generously to help the victims of this natural disaster. Chinese Christians were no exception, and February's Tian Feng magazine carries a report on how Chinese believers responded to the tragedy.

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The earthquake which stirred up the Indian Ocean in December 2004 and created the disastrous tsunami which destroyed so many lives also stirred up positive feelings of human compassion and warmth in those who learned of the disaster and wanted to help. This "universal compassion" went beyond national considerations and boundaries.

Soon after the disaster struck, the Chinese government pledged RMB 500 million (= US$ 60 million) to help victims. At the same time, every sector of Chinese society put their hands in their pockets and gave what they could. By 10th January 2005, a total of more than RMB 153 million (= US$ 18 million) had been received by the Chinese Red Cross and other Chinese charity organizations.

The disaster also tugged at every Chinese Christian's heart. On 1st January 2005, Rev. Mei Kangjun from the national CCC / TSPM offices in Shanghai presented RMB 100,000 (=US$ 12,000) to the Shanghai Red Cross as a token of Chinese Christians' concern and love for the tsunami victims. A prayer and donation meeting was also held for the victims early in the new year. At the same time, the CCC / TSPM national offices mailed every local CCC / TSPM asking them to give what they could. Churches all over the country responded with compassion, and the following are a representative sample of what was given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Amount (RMB)</th>
<th>Amount (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>32,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianjin</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>13,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td>84,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chongqing</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhejiang</td>
<td>210,000</td>
<td>25,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>20,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiangxi</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>16,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>10,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nanjing Union Theological Seminary also contributed RMB 16,556 (=US$2,000). When the church in Shaanxi made its appeal to believers for donations, it also asked them to give to victims of a more local mining disaster which had occurred within the province itself at around the same time as the tsunami. The letter read "Our neighbour is right next to us", reminding believers that tragedy can strike both far away and close to home at any time.
At the same time as giving funds to help tsunami victims in a practical way, Chinese Christians also supported the victims in prayer. They prayed for God to show kindness and mercy on the deceased and their relatives, and to be with those people who lost their homes and whose spirits were damaged by the shock of the disaster. Christians in China were reminded that human beings are in many ways tiny and insignificant when facing the forces of nature and that, as such, humanity must strive all the more to put an end to man-made disasters, such as wars caused by differences in race or culture or religion. We are all part of a "global village" and need to watch out for and care for one another, not destroy ourselves.

2005.5/6.3

Church Leaders Express Support For New "Anti-Secession" Law

(ANS) On 22nd March 2005, around 30 staff at the national CCC / TSPM headquarters and the Shanghai CCC / TSPM met in Shanghai to hold a forum discussing the new "anti-secession law" passed by the 3rd session of the 10th National People's Congress on 14th March 2005. Although some of those present were not feeling well, they still attended the meeting to demonstrate their support for the law and concern for the circumstances that prompted its passing. April's issue of Tian Feng magazine reports on the discussions at the forum.

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President of the China Christian Council, Rev. Cao Shengjie, chaired the "anti-secession law" discussion forum, where participants affirmed that the law was very necessary, very timely, and was a legal means by which to oppose "Taiwan independence forces" from attempting to break up the country. Participants believed that the law promotes peace, unity and stability within China and across the Taiwan Straits, maintaining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Participants expressed deep concern about a recent statement made by Taiwanese churches advocating "Taiwanese independence". Discussion then moved to evidence which points to Taiwan being an inseparable part of China. Elder Lu Jiangming mentioned the "Cairo Declaration" (1943) and the "Potsdam Proclamation" (1945) as historical international agreements which affirmed Taiwan's status as part of China. Elder Lu Chuanfang then spoke of his own personal experience of witnessing Taiwan's return to the motherland in 1945, and talked of how popular sentiment on both sides of the Taiwan Straits also points to the unity which exists between mainlancers and Taiwanese. Pastor Hua Yaozong pointed out that it should be for the people of both Taiwan and mainland China to decide the fate of Taiwan, and not just a handful of "Taiwanese separatists". Finally, Yan Zhiyuan, committee member of the Seventh National TSPM Committee, composed an impromptu poem for participants on the theme of "Taiwanese independence": "Peace and unity is the hope ... world opinion supports us ... (with the law) the great cause of unity has been safeguarded ... Taiwanese independence clowns shouldn't be too arrogant ... if they play with fire, they'll get burned."

Many of the participants at the forum have relatives, friends and students who live in Taiwan, all of whom have stated categorically in the past that they do not support Taiwan splitting away from the rest of China. Elder Chen Zhimin commented how mainlanders and Taiwanese have the same blood coursing through their veins, they
share the same race, culture, language, habits and characteristics. He also mentioned how huge numbers of Taiwanese are now seeking to come to the mainland to study, invest or live. As exchanges between Taiwan and the mainland increase, the call for peace and unity on both sides of the Taiwan Straits is only getting louder and louder.

Rev. Cao pointed out that the new "anti-secession law" represents the will and feelings of the vast multitude of Chinese people, including Chinese Christians. Participants expressed the hope that Taiwanese Christians in particular would not be deceived by Taiwanese separatists. At the same time, the Chinese church on the mainland must do what it can to promote unity through making contact with Taiwanese churches and church organizations and enthusiastically developing friendly exchanges between Christians on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. Furthermore, participants affirmed that the question of Taiwan is an internal matter for China to resolve, and overseas groups should not interfere in this matter.

At the end of the forum, participants joined with Rev. Cao to pray for the peaceful reunification between mainland China and Taiwan island. Tian Feng also reports that the CCC / TSPM has received many calls and telegrams from people both at home and abroad, expressing support for the new law. In the coming months, local CCC / TSPM committees all over the country will hold similar meetings to study and discuss the new law themselves.

2005.5/6/4

A Place To Worship The One True God: Hangzhou's New Church

(ANS) Hangzhou is the capital of southern China's Zhejiang Province and is famous for its West Lake and other places of historical and cultural significance. The city itself has a population of around 3.6 million, rising to some 6.5 million when including the surrounding counties and districts which the city serves. There are an estimated 150,000 Christians in Hangzhou, and the city's churches come nowhere near to serving the needs of the city's ever-growing community of believers. All this changed in May this year, however, when a huge brand new church was dedicated in the heart of the city.

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On December 19th 1999, during an evening prayer meeting, several church workers in Hangzhou received a vision to build a "mega church" in the heart of Hangzhou. They carried this vision to a summer retreat in 2001 where all the church workers in Hangzhou committed to building such a church. In December 2001, the Hangzhou city government allocated 1.33 hectares of prime city centre land to the new church, something almost unheard of within a major city centre in China. The site of this land is across from a major new shopping mall and close to one of the future subway stations planned for the city. On December 30th 2003, some 2,000 believers attended a thanksgiving service to mark the occasion of laying the foundation stone at the new site, and this service was even broadcast by the local Hangzhou TV station. Construction finally began in earnest on 9th February 2004. All buildings were completed and certified on 21st July 2004, and the entire project was dedicated on 5th May 2005.
The new building is called Chong Yi Church, with chong yi translating in to English as “worship the one and only true God”. This was also the name of a previous large church in Hangzhou which was originally built by the China Inland Mission more than one hundred years ago. Hangzhou Christians have faith in the words of scripture which say: “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house, and in this house I will grant peace.” (Haggai 2: 8-9)

The main sanctuary of the new church can seat more than 5,000 people for Sunday worship. The church complex also includes a large multifunction building. This can provide for conferences of up to 150 persons, a training centre for the 1,000 or so lay preachers in Hangzhou, and also Sunday school classes for all ages. Room is also allocated for choir practice and for a regular English-language worship service which can accommodate 400 people and aims to reach out to the expatriate community in Hangzhou.

The building of the Chong Yi Church has received the complete backing of Hangzhou’s Christian community. The entire project cost some RMB 42 million (=US$ 5 million), of which RMB 38 million (=US$ 4.6 million) has already been raised through the generous donations of believers both within and outside of Zhejiang Province. During the construction process, bulletins on the progress were posted in other churches in the city and believers would often come to the site of the new church to pray during construction.

2005.5/6.5

Chinese Christian Women Let Their Light Shine

(ANS) “Let our light shine” was the theme of the 2005 World Women’s Prayer Day which took place on Friday 4th March 2005. In April’s edition of Tian Feng magazine, Rev. Mei Kangjun reflects on how Chinese Christian women “shine” with the love of God in today’s China, illuminating inequalities and encouraging their removal.

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Mary was not just the mother of Jesus Christ; she was also in many respects a model for all Christian women down the ages. In the history of religion, we often see women being placed at the edge of the group, undervalued and denied respect. Mary lived in such times. As with many Chinese women believers today, Mary probably had little chance for an education and had to rely on others to read and interpret God’s word for her. However, she let this word enter her heart and soul, so that when the angel of the Lord appeared to her and explained how her life was going to change, she replied without hesitation: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Regardless of the status of women in human society, God showed through Mary and through other women, such as her cousin Elizabeth, how highly woman are valued and respected by God. Mary’s son, Jesus Christ, also demonstrated God’s view of women, never seeing them as weak and inferior individuals in need of help as the society around him saw them, but seeing them as equals, as colleagues and friends.
The Chinese church currently has 548 ordained women ministers, 920 women elders, 290 women teachers, 7,908 women evangelists, as well as countless millions of ordinary women believers. They are all the inheritors of Mary's spirit, the ones who seek to continue her song of praise: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour" (Luke 1:46,47).

In the life of the Chinese church, we have seen many examples of outstanding Christian women who have been a model and example to us all. In 1986, Bishop KH Ting spoke at the memorial service for Dr. Wu Yifang, a Chinese Christian woman and former president of Jinling Women's College in Nanjing (Jiangsu Province). He said: "Ms. Wu was always pushing beyond herself, seeking, embracing and embodying unlimited truth, beauty and goodness ... she strove always to overcome the gap between Christ and the people through her own actions, so as to enable more people to change their views of Christ and approach Christ."

Since the 20th century, Chinese women in general have been making advances, trying to cast off the constraints of their traditional role in society and take part in China's modernization process on equal terms with men. However, old prejudices die hard and, while equality is promoted in theory, equal rights for women are still not always realized in practice. For example, women still make up over 65% of the population in China's most rural, backward and remote areas, and the illiteracy rate among women in such areas is over 70%. In so many ways, women are still disadvantaged in Chinese society, and every sector of society, including the church, needs to play its part in pushing the boundaries of male-female equality ever wider.

Everything we do must be based on love - love from God and for God and for other people. When we are motivated by love, we cannot help but make an impact on those around us and plant seeds for change. Women in the Chinese church offer many examples of such love and acts of faith. In February this year, Yang Guoqing from Jining in Shandong Province heard about the groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (see ANS 2005.1/2.2). On hearing the news, she travelled hundreds of miles to the CCC headquarters in Shanghai and donated RMB 10,000 (= US$ 1,200) from her own savings towards the building of the new campus. Yang is a highly educated woman, with two Masters degrees from both the People's University and Beijing University in the capital. On making her donation, Yang simply said that theological education is the most fundamental undertaking which will shape the church in its future development, so ordinary Chinese Christians must take responsibility for it as much as possible.

Meanwhile, there are many challenges facing modern society and, indeed, the wider world which the church needs to respond to with love and self-denial. The experience of SARS and the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean reminded everyone of their own frailty and mortality. At the same time, many in China worry about the decline in social morals and ethics and also environmental damage in the face of a society seemingly obsessed with materialism, consumerism and "money worship". In such a climate of uncertainty, the loving and selfless deeds of Chinese Christian women shine through in sharp contrast. Ma Xiaohui is a good example of this. A Christian and a famous Chinese erhu (Chinese violin) player, she went ahead with performing at the August 2004 Bible exhibition in Hong Kong despite suffering from excruciating neck pain at the time. She explained that she had to put aside her own
discomfort and needs for the greater good of others, wanting to praise and witness to God through her music at this historic event for the Chinese church.

When Chinese Christian women embody the love of God and the spirit of Mary, the mother of God, they are a powerful witness shining within society, a witness which is capable of transforming society and changing hearts and minds.

2005.5/6.6

Tian Feng Magazine Marks Its 60th Anniversary

(ANS) Long-time readers of Amity News Service will be familiar with the Chinese words Tian Feng or "Heavenly Wind", the name of the national monthly magazine of the Protestant Churches in China and source of many ANS articles. 2005 sees the 60th anniversary of Tian Feng and, to commemorate the occasion, the magazine published reflections on the evolution of the magazine in its March edition this year.

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Tian Feng saw its beginnings in February 1945 in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. At that time, the anti-Japanese war was raging, soon to be followed by the struggle between the Nationalists and the Communists. It was founded by Wu Yaozong (YT Wu) and he was once asked the significance of the magazine's name. His reply was that he wanted the magazine to be a place where Christian perspectives could be offered on the issues of the day, as if a breath of clean and fresh air were blowing down from heaven to dispel the dark and gloomy atmosphere of the times.

In August 1945, after the war with Japan was over, the magazine moved to Shanghai. After Liberation in 1949, editor Zheng Jianye made sweeping changes at the magazine, removing various columns which did not fit the new mood of the times and publishing more articles aimed at helping pastors adapt to the new reality. Zheng himself wrote one article advocating reform within the Chinese Christian Church.

After Liberation, 1951 saw America put a freeze on Chinese property and assets in the States, and this signalled the start of a very difficult period for Chinese Christianity. In April of the same year, the state Religious Affairs Bureau in Beijing held a meeting especially devoted to the question of Christian groups in China who receive money from America. The meeting decided that Chinese Christian groups should immediately break off relations with overseas church denominations and begin the process of setting up what was later to become the independent Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). The preparatory committee for this movement met in May 1951 and decided to make Tian Feng its official mouthpiece, and the magazine had already decided not to accept foreign subsidies any longer. A new page in the history of the magazine had begun.

During the period before the Cultural Revolution (1949 - 1966), the magazine was under the editorship of Shen Derong and travelled on a very winding road. On the positive side, it helped in the promotion and setting up of regional Three-Self groups and also gave many young Chinese Christians at the time a chance to work on the magazine and hone their writing skills. However, under the influence of various
"ultra leftist" tendencies, the magazine also made some unfortunate mistakes. As time progressed, the magazine went from a weekly to a bimonthly to a monthly publication, then published its last edition in 1965 before the Cultural Revolution started and publication stopped altogether.

**Tian Feng** didn't resurface again until after the 3rd National Chinese Christian Conference in 1980. Initially, only one person worked on the magazine, editor Shen Cheng'en, but he was soon joined by Mei Tingjun (the brother of current editor, Mei Kangjun) and Zhang Wenbo. Zhang had previously worked on the magazine and agreed to come out of retirement to help re-launch the publication after the Cultural Revolution.

In the 1980s the magazine came out on a bimonthly basis and the editorial team was not fixed or stable - workers were often "borrowed" from other departments to help with putting the magazine together. No one knew how to use a computer at the time and everything had to be done by hand. Furthermore, everything in China operated under a planned economy in those days, so the printing of **Tian Feng** was assigned by the state to a printing press far from the CCC / TSPM offices, and the printing process involved a great deal of bureaucracy coupled with rather poor service quality. A further problem was that the editor, Shen Cheng'en, and his staff had no real training or experience in editing and just thought that being a fairly good writer was all it took to produce a good magazine. They were thus shocked to receive back the proofs from early editions of the magazine and find the layout in a mess because they hadn't considered factors such as article length and correct use of space.

During his time as editor of **Tian Feng** (1980 - 2002), Shen mentions two particular problems which he was always wrestling with. One was exactly how he, as editor, could make sure he served the needs of all his readers. The readership of **Tian Feng** is extremely diverse, ranging from highly educated and intellectual city dwellers to semi-literate peasant farmers, from the young to the old, from theologically trained pastors to ordinary believers. Each group had its favourite columns in **Tian Feng** and wanted more of what they preferred. When the Chinese church as a whole started paying attention to the re-construction of theological thinking, Shen decided to publish more theological essays in **Tian Feng** but then found many people cancelling their subscriptions because they simply couldn't understand all the essays. There was some discussion at one point of "splitting up" the content of **Tian Feng** in to three new separate publications - one containing theological essays, one containing "teaching material" for simple rural believers, and one containing material for more educated believers in the cities. However, there was resistance to this from many quarters - **Tian Feng** was an established publication with its own place in Chinese believers' hearts, and most responded that they'd rather keep this one publication with a "brand name" they recognized and loved and make suggestions about its content than have it disappear and be replaced by something else.

The second problem Shen mentions has to do with being careful not to give any ammunition to people who are anti-China and against the Chinese church. In the early 1990s, Shen decided to run several articles in **Tian Feng** about how religious policy was being implemented throughout China. Most of the articles pointed out
how religious policy was, for the most part, being implemented fairly well, but a handful also mentioned places where policy was not being implemented correctly. This reflected the information on religious policy implementation that the magazine itself was receiving from believers all over China at the time. Unfortunately, someone in Hong Kong decided to take only the negative reports published in Tian Feng and use them as "proof" in his own article that there were serious problems with the implementation of religious policy in China, without mentioning any of the positive articles at all. As a result of this, Shen felt obliged to stop publishing the negative reports to prevent "anti-China forces" and opponents of the Chinese church from misusing such articles in their own publications.

Chinese call the span of 60 years a jiazi. Former editor of Tian Feng, Shen Derong, hopes that, during its next jiazi, the magazine will stand for promoting harmony - harmony in society, harmony within Christianity itself, harmony between Christianity and members of other religious groups, and a "harmonious" theology which is always in tune with the current Chinese situation.

2005.5/6.7

The Gift Of Healing To All Who Need It

(ANS) On 28th September 2004, Elder Chen Shubai from Huainan City Municipal Christian Council in Anhui Province was invited to the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to collect an award for his work in setting up and running a church-run hospital in his hometown. The hospital offers medical services to both believers and those in need in the wider community outside the church and has been going strong for over ten years now. February's edition of Tian Feng magazine offers a glimpse in to the many acts of selfless love performed by Elder Chen and his dedicated team of healthcare professionals.

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Guangji Hospital in Huainan city puts the needs of patients first. No-one is turned away, regardless of their personal circumstances and their ability to cover the costs of the treatment they need.

Take the example of Yang Guihua, a young out-of-work single parent living in the city's Datong district and with a young daughter in primary school to support. When she came to the hospital for an operation for acute appendicitis, they learned of her difficult family circumstances and decided to completely waive the RMB 1,100 (= US$ 132) in medical fees which she owed them. What's more, the staff of the hospital also organized a collection and put together more than RMB 500 (= US$ 60) of their own money to help her buy nourishing food after her operation.

Or take the example of Duan Dawen, a former army man in his 60s living in a poor household in An Tai village, Gao Huang township, near Huainan. He had a fall while riding his bicycle one day and broke several bones, including his collar bone, requiring treatment at the hospital for over two months. When the hospital learned of his difficult personal circumstances, they cancelled his medical bills and also sent him off with a little cash and a case of instant noodles when he left the hospital. Now Duan is able to get around on crutches by himself.
Then there is the case of Shi Lanying. She is a Christian woman in her 50s who has to support a daughter in school and also an out-of-work son. At the same time, she suffers from a number of serious ailments - failing eyesight, high blood pressure, high blood fat content and diabetes. Every year for several years now she has come to the hospital for treatment some five or six times a year and, in recognition of her difficult family circumstances, the hospital only charges her for her medication, waving any fees for medical examinations, tests or injections. They see her as one of their "regulars".

Faith motivates the staff of the Guangji Hospital to reach out in love in this way. Every Monday morning, about one hour after everyone has arrived for work, the head of the hospital leads the entire staff in Bible study. He sees their spiritual growth as vital to their helping patients heal physically. The dedication of the staff really shines through. After long hard weeks serving at the hospital, many of them voluntarily give up their weekends and holidays to travel to surrounding villages and offer free medical services and medicines to people living in these remote areas. Meanwhile, the hospital has printed and distributed a special "patient's card" to the tens of thousands of believers in the Huainan city area which they can show at the hospital in order to apply for treatment at a reduced rate. However, the hospital is willing to consider anyone's circumstances when offering treatment, regardless of whether they believe or not.

In order to sustain the quality of its medical services, Guangji Hospital currently employs six medical experts and professors. It has also taken on an extra 28 people who were recently made redundant and desperately needed work. In the ten years it has been running, it has seen more than 30,000 patients and has managed to cure some 95% of them. It is also proud of the fact that it has never known a single accident or case of negligence in all the time it has been running. In January 2003, Director Chen was especially invited to Shanghai by the Social Service Department of the national CCC / TSPM to attend a forum on the church's social service work and introduce the work of his hospital there.

The way in which the Guangji Hospital reaches out to all in need, regardless of their faith, can perhaps be illustrated by the example of Li Suying. She is a 54-year-old Muslim farmer from Goubei Village, Gugou Muslim Township, in the Panji District outside of Huainan City. A few years ago she arrived at the Guangji Hospital complaining of frequent stomach pains. The hospital found she was suffering from gall stones and acute inflammation of the gall bladder, requiring urgent hospitalization and surgery. Even though Li had no money with her at the time, the hospital took her in and operated, removing a stone 17 millimetres in diameter. Li and her family of four all live in the countryside and find it hard to make ends meet. Therefore, the hospital deducted RMB 400 (= US$ 48) from her medical bill and Director Chen himself covered her travel costs out of his own pocket. In gratitude, Li's family later presented a cloth banner to the hospital which read "Noble medical ethics, superb medical skills".
Helping China's Autistic Children

(ANS) It was in 1943 that Dr. Leo Kanner in the U.S. identified a means for clinically diagnosing autism. The condition can often be identified in children even prior to the age of three-years-old and presents serious obstacles to a child's development. Autism often manifests itself in terms of difficulties with social interaction, speech impediments, possessing very narrow or fixed interests, and is often accompanied by unusually repetitive behaviour and mannerisms. Researchers believe that the rate of incidence of autism is increasing worldwide, and the disease is basically a lifelong condition which has consequences for the sufferer, their family and the wider community around them.

In recent times, the national CCC / TSPM's Social Service Department has taken an interest in the question of autism in China and is supporting efforts by local churches to get involved with autism treatment and research. May's issue of Tian Feng magazine carries a report on a recent meeting in Qingdao (Shandong Province) to discuss this work.

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From what we know, Chinese experts have been conducting research on autism in China since 1982, and it is estimated that China now has around one million autism sufferers. However, since autism closely resembles some mental handicaps or retardation, it has often been confused with these conditions and wrongly diagnosed. Therefore, the total number of autism cases in China could be higher than currently reported.

On 14th and 15th April this year, a meeting was held in Qingdao in northern China's Shandong Province hosted by the national CCC / TSPM to discuss treatment of children with autism. The meeting was attended by the head of the CCC / TSPM's Social Service Department, Rev. Deng Fucun, as well as Chen Meilin of the Overseas Relations Department and representatives from churches in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Qingdao and Dalian cities. Experts from overseas also attended, including representatives from Educational Services Exchange with China (ESEC), the Christian Leadership Exchange (CLE), students and professors from Hong Kong as well as from theological research institutes.

"Yilin" is the name of an autism research group and autistic children's education society founded by a Ms. Fang Jing and located in the northern part of Qingdao. It is supported by both the national CCC / TSPM and the local Qingdao church, and it specializes in the treatment of autistic children. Ms. Fang reported on the work of the Yilin group at the meeting and said that some 20% of Yilin's children are able to return to a normal or nearly normal life after treatment. Traditional treatments for autistic children involve behavioural correction, speech therapy and especially music therapy, as it is recognized that autistic children generally have higher innate music skills than regular children. Dr. Rimland from the American Autism Association, for example, has shown that music activities can not only breath new life in to otherwise routine and dull treatments for an autistic child but can also enhance their feelings of participation with others around them. The Yilin group in Qingdao has been seeking to supplement traditional treatments for autism with other methods specifically tailored to Chinese autistic children and the Chinese environment. They have also
experienced some success combining their methods with carefully chosen vitamin and mineral supplements.

Representatives from churches in other parts of China attended the meeting with a view to learning from Qingdao's work with autistic children and starting their own such projects in the not-too-distant future. The Social Service Department of the CCC / TSPM supports such efforts. To be effective, any treatment and help that autistic children receive needs to be accompanied by plenty of love and affection, and the Social Service Department see the giving of such love as one of the primary reasons for churches to get involved in social service work.

At the same time, however, working with autistic children and other kinds of medical work requires a high degree of specialized knowledge and expertise. Dr. Yu Guoliang is the Director General of ESEC and has been supporting the Chinese church's social service work for some time now, having previously organized a donation drive in the US to provide wheelchairs to those in need in Jiangxi Province in China. Dr. Yu believes that, for the Chinese church to succeed in its social service work, it has to place importance on upgrading the training, quality and expertise of those who do such work.

Using Hearts To "Hear" The Gospel

(ANS) Among the many who came to faith and were baptized at Dongshan church in Guangdong Province in July 2004, ten of the new believers were deaf-mutes. April's edition of Tian Feng magazine explores just how these believers "heard" the Gospel and came to faith.

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Every Sunday several rows of special red-coloured chairs are reserved on the second floor of Dongshan church in southern China's Guangdong province. This is where the church's deaf-mute fellowship sits together during worship.

Very few Chinese believers have learned or understand sign language, so few, if any, churches have any kind of outreach to the deaf in their local communities. A few years ago, a deaf believer at a church in Shenzhen decided to do something about this. Brother Shao was part of a small deaf believers' fellowship which was set up in 2000 in that church. The church decided to reach out to other deaf believers in the province, so Brother Shao went to Dongshan church in the provincial capital, Guangzhou (Canton) and set up a deaf-mute fellowship there in January 2001.

At the time of its founding, Brother Shao's aim for the fellowship was to reach out to the deaf and mute in the wider community and let them "hear" the Gospel. In the past three years, the fellowship has grown through personal introductions and evangelism carried out by the deaf fellowship members themselves. New members come not only from Guangzhou city itself but also include deaf and mute people from all over China who have come to Guangzhou as migrant workers seeking a better life for themselves in the big city. It was through this personal outreach that a group of deaf-mute people joined the church's "Seekers" class last year and 10 of them went forward for baptism in July.
Life is not easy as a deaf-mute person, and one of the primary functions of the fellowship is for the members to offer mutual support, prayer and practical help to each other. Apart from leading the fellowship's worship times, Brother Shao has also divided the fellowship into small groups who are then given the task to visit each other, study the Bible and pray together regularly.

Despite the mutual support within the deaf-mute fellowship, the group still feels somewhat isolated from the main body of the church congregation. Nobody outside the fellowship can use sign language so contacts and exchanges are limited. There is also nobody available who can hear the pastor's sermons or the liturgy and hymns at Sunday worship and interpret them in to sign language for the fellowship. As a result, the group's members are only really able to join in the worship by reading the assigned Bible passages for any given Sunday and then working out their own interpretations without the aid of the teaching in the sermon. Brother Shao hopes that some in the "hearing" congregation will be inspired to eventually learn sign language and interpret for the fellowship during services, so that the group's members and the regular congregation can worship as one body.

2005.5/6.10

Reading The Bible At Last

(ANS) Imagine you had to live most of your life without having learned to read and write, without the ability to read the Bible. This is a reality for many rural believers who grew up in hardship and poverty and never had the chance of an education. April's edition of Tian Feng reports on a church in the remote northeast of China which is seeking to "remove the darkness" of their members' illiteracy.

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"God loves me, God loves you, God loves us all..." These words can be heard coming from the mouths of a very special group of around 100 or so believers in Song Pu village church way up north in China's Heilongjiang Province.

These believers are all older folk between 55 and 70 years old who have never learned to read or write. When they were younger, they lived in large families in remote villages with many siblings. Life was hard and family circumstances prevented these believers from ever having a chance of an education. After coming to faith and joining the church, pastoral workers in the church noticed that, unlike other worshippers, these believers never took notes on the Sunday sermon or carried a Bible so that they could follow the readings being used in the service. Once they realized that there were many such believers in the congregation, and that these believers were being denied access to opportunities for spiritual growth by being unable to read the Bible or other spiritual materials, church leaders organized a literacy class using materials published by the national CCC / TSPM. These materials use Christian words and phrases to help illiterate believers begin their journey towards reading and writing.

Most of the students in the class have grey hair and many have various physical ailments such as bad legs. However, participating in the class has renewed their zest for life and, even on freezing cold winter and blazing hot summer days, no-one has ever been absent. Study is not easy for these believers, as their eyes, hearing
and memory are not as good as they used to be. Many also have heavy family
commitments in terms of housework and farm work, so they cannot always complete
their homework from the class.

Despite difficulties, the students are making progress. They have now grasped
simple words and phrases and are now progressing on to constructing sentences by
themselves, distinguishing synonyms and words with the same sound but different
meanings and, most importantly, integrating all that they learn in to their Bible
reading and prayer. In this way they reinforce what they learn while receiving God’s
teaching and truths at the same time.

It has now been two years since the Song Pu church literacy class started. The
class members can now read their Bibles in Sunday services, join in with many of
the hymns, and also write and perform their own sketches at the annual Christmas
party at the church. Liu Guifang, a class member in her sixties, uses words she has
read in Ephesians 4:13 to express how she feels: "I am in the last part of my life, I
want to devote myself to the Lord’s service ... now I have come to the knowledge of
the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."

2005.5/6.11

The Chinese Banyan Tree Theology Of Bishop KH Ting

Donald E. Messner is the Henry White Professor of Practical Theology and President Emeritus of the
Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado, USA. On 23rd February 2005, Professor Messner
presented his theological reflections on Bishop KH Ting’s book God Is Love, published in the U.S. by
Cook Communications Ministries International, at the Executive Forum on Ministry in Colorado
Springs (see ANS 2005.5/6.1). The following are extracts from Professor Messner’s presentation, the
full text of which can be found on the ANS website at http://www.amitynewsservice.org.

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The Theological Roots of Bishop KH Ting’s
Thinking

Helpful to understanding any theological thinker is to examine what academicians call
the “sociology of knowledge.” All of us are shaped by the context and experiences of our
existential life and faith.

Most Americans cannot imagine the depth and
scope of the suffering of the Chinese people.
We can neither comprehend the old world of
imperialism and colonialism, nor can we grasp
an appreciation of socialism and a positive role
of Marxists and Communists. My 95-year-old
mother, like most of us Americans, would find
it difficult to comprehend what it has meant to
be a Christian in China during the past century.

Ting’s theology clearly was shaped by the
experiences and education of his youth

His mother helped persuade him to change
from studying engineering to theology at St.
John’s University, an Anglican sponsored
college in Shanghai. The university had high
academic standards and taught a classical
Western understanding of theology. In fact, it
was accused of contributing to the
“foreignization” of Christian intellectuals.

The Shanghai of Ting’s youth was heavily
impacted by the imperial power of other
countries. Protestants numbered only about
100,000, with only 300 Chinese clergy and
3,500 foreign missionaries. In Shanghai, Ting
witnessed wealth, but at the same time he saw
on the streets ragged impoverished men,
women and children.

Despite being exposed to a Western-style
theological education, Ting throughout his life
resisted “foreignization” of his thinking and
championed Chinese patriotism and
nationalism. The theological assumptions and
assertions expressed in God is Love reflect both his deep grounding in classical Western Christian thought, as well as his critical contextualization of the faith appropriate to a Chinese situation.

The prophetic nature of Bishop Ting's ministry is impossible for the outsider to know and understand. He has functioned as a courageous Christian leader of a small minority church in a great land during tumultuous times. I cannot measure the meaning and importance of exercising ecclesiological and political prudence in a nation lacking total freedom. Ting also has witnessed the horrendous abuses of imperialism and colonialism from both the West and Japan, and experienced distortions and misinterpretations from critics outside China who have chosen to malign his country and church.

Ting's theological perspectives reflect a lifetime of immersion in active administrative Christian leadership and service.

Ting is a practical theologian or "activist-theologian" par excellence. He never enjoyed the "luxury" or perhaps the inclination to be a systematic academic theologian. Instead he shared his theological perspectives, while working as a Shanghai pastor, Christian student movement leader, church bishop, Principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, and head of the China Christian Council, National Three-Self Movement, and Amity Foundation. He served as a member of the National People's Congress and vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

He weaves a Chinese theology based on the Bible, tradition, reason and experience. This way of doing theology clearly draws upon his Anglican roots as well as his experience with the Student Christian Movement and early work of the World Council of Churches. Since his earliest days at the Shanghai YMCA and with the Student Christian Movement, Ting has taken a theological approach to reading, teaching, and preaching the Bible within the context of political and social events.

Ting's theological perspectives were especially influenced by the Christian leader, Y.T. Wu (1890-1979)

Ting's writings rarely cite Western theologians. However, his life-long teacher and friend, Y.T. Wu clearly nurtured the theological outlook of Bishop Ting. Ting also experienced his own type of conversion after encountering Wu. Ting reports, "When I heard Y.T. Wu introduce Jesus Christ as a patriot who loves his people and as a hero who sacrificed himself to save them, it was like a breath of fresh air. I gained some political insight and from then on I was convinced that reforming China was the top priority." This vision of a Jesus who stood with the suffering masses became a dominant theme in all Ting's subsequent preaching and teaching.

Wu further influenced Ting in many ways over the years. He pointed to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25 about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc., and noted that atheist Communists might deny Christ but they often put love into practice, while Christians often professed a love for Christ but did not love the masses.

A Chinese Banyan Tree Theology

The Chinese banyan tree (Ficus microcarpa) has flourished because of its unusual tolerance to stressful environmental conditions. It survives because "it can soldier on despite the odds."

Like a mature and majestic Chinese banyan tree, Bishop KH Ting's indigenous theology has developed and spread over a large area of the church's life, mission and ministry. Its canopy has provided excellent spiritual shade, shelter and strength for Chinese Christians as they have faced the rigorous responsibilities and challenges of their church and society. There are several primary branches or contributions Ting has made, not only to the Chinese church but also to global Christianity.

"God's primary attribute is love, and Jesus is both the Great Lover of all humanity as well as the Cosmic Christ"

This conception of God as the Divine lover undergirds Ting's theology and approach to the mission and ministry of the church in the world. For him, "God is love. This is the greatest fact of all the facts of the cosmos." Ting laments that in so much of Christianity, God is envisioned in terms of "the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist or the unmoved mover."

Two portraits of Jesus in the New Testament especially appeal to Ting. One image is that of Jesus the Great Lover of all men and women, who reaches out to every human being, regardless of how outcast,
marginalized, or mistreated. Both to the "sinner" and the "sinned-against" Jesus offers love and compassion.

Combined with this image is that of Jesus the Cosmic Christ. Lest Christians be fixated by the image of Jesus, the Christ, being crucified on a cross, Ting hastens to emphasize that Jesus, the Cosmic Christ, always has been present sustaining all of creation. "Jesus," notes Bishop Ting, "never made belief / unbelief the standard for whether a person went to heaven or hell."

A "banyan tree" type of theology affirms that it is not God's will for the masses to suffer or for evil to prosper in the political processes. God is not all-powerful in control of every event in their life, but God is all loving, caring about every event in their life. It lays an understanding that socialism could possibly be "love organized for the masses of the people," helping them to live more decently than previous models of economic government have permitted.

Ting's Christology helps us understand why atheism is not the last word. As Ting's wife, Siu May, once said, "As Chinese Christians we do not see Christianity and socialist China as opposed to each other. It is God working, whether in his name or not." Or as Bishop Ting says, "God's saving work is not coterminous with the boundary of the church. It has the whole cosmos as its arena."

*Human beings are both sinners and sinned-against, but also retain the divine image of God*

Ting affirms that human beings are imperfect and fall short of the standards of God. He does not, however, deny human goodness or paint a portrait of human beings as totally depraved. Citing 1 Corinthians 11:7, he claims "In spite of the fall, a human being is still the image of God, and the mirror of his glory...."

Sin is more than personal and is embodied in social structures and processes. Reformation of society is often required before there can be real reformation of the human being. Societies and cultures mired down by massive poverty, corruption, disease, hunger, and crime are breeding grounds for even more poverty, corruption, disease, hunger, and crime.

Liberation is a long process, and China is "still at the first stage of socialism" with quite a few people still suffering "from ignorance and poverty in varying degrees." Ting has never completely embraced any of the various "liberation" theologies and has warned against idealizing poverty and romanticizing the poor. He writes we should "hesitate to think that the poor, just because they are poor, are necessarily the bearers of truth... The poor deserve justice. But poverty is no virtue, unless voluntary, and does not always bring with it wisdom." Ting has emphasized that the "eternal theme of theology is reconciliation - with God and with others - and not liberation."

**The unity of the church, post-denominationalism, and the Three-Self movement**

Ting has sought to transcend and transform past ecclesiological presumptions and practices and move toward a new understanding of the church appropriate for a contemporary China. The new post-denominational church (which has emerged in China) corresponds closely to the pictures of churches portrayed in the New Testament. In contrast, no biblical analogy quite matches the denominational, bureaucratic model characteristic of most of the globe's churches.

Cut off from the historic "foreign" denominations in about 1949, it was theologically and politically necessary for the Chinese to discover new ways of church organization. Theologians of China have evolved over the past fifty plus years a pattern of post-denominational church life, which holds together a broad diversity of Christians. It has sought to transcend the narrow Western denominational histories and practices that were earlier imported to China. The church in China seeks to hold together in genuine respect and equality Christians who historically and theologically often have been light-years apart.

Key to this movement has been the embrace of the Three-Self movement, a strategy of "making Christianity Chinese." The church is in the process of adding a "Fourth-Self": self-theologizing. Biblical text and Chinese context in dialogue may free Christian theology from the chains of Aristotelian, Latin, and Teutonic thought prisons. Bishop Ting embraces the core faith and values of historic Christianity but knows that unless authentic Christian faith is conveyed and communicated as an authentic Chinese expression, it will always remain "foreign" to the Chinese experience. He continues to plead for efforts at "theological reconstruction" by new generations of Chinese
Christians, lest they slip into thinking in terms and categories more suitable for the Western mind. He is concerned that this theologizing be reflective of a "conversation not only with the social and cultural context within which the church finds its being, but also within the minds and hearts of the masses of the Christians within the fold of the church."

The key importance of Christian ethics and service to church and society as expressions of Chinese patriotism

Chinese Christians are called to demonstrate their love and loyalty for country and people by self-giving service aimed at improving the health and welfare of the masses. Christians personally must seek to exemplify high ethics and morals in society. Confucianism has had a deep impact (in China), ethics has an important missiological value. Many persons have been brought to Christ because of the ethical content of the Gospel. There are many things to be done in China, and the government cannot do all. "Love country, love church," says Ting, "must not remain in the realm of theory and slogan, but be made visible in deeds of service to society and to the church."

By 2010, the number of HIV infected people in China could rise tenfold to 10 million persons. In the next five years, how will Chinese Christians respond? Will the church be in denial and think that this is just a problem for some people in the country? Bishop Ting notes that Christians seek to be good Chinese citizens, but sometimes they hang on to an old theology that does not get them involved in service that helps ameliorate the suffering of the people. The same indictment can be laid at the doorsteps of churches in the United States.

2005.5/6.12

**Bishop Ting’s Speech To The "Jinling Forum" On Theological Education And Reconstruction Of Chinese Theological Thinking**

In the last issue of ANS (2005.3/4.9), we reported on a speech given by Bishop KH Ting in January this year at a forum held in conjunction with the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Nanjing Union Theological Seminary campus. In the speech, Bishop Ting surprised many present at the forum by raising the question of whether religion is an opiate or not. Below is the full text of his speech, translated by ANS from the original Chinese text printed in Volume 1 (2005) of the Jinling Theological Review.

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I believe that very lively theological thinking should be part of our theological education, but I feel that our theological thinking is just not lively enough. I want to give this a go, to propose a task which will liven up theological thinking, a topic, indeed a question which Chinese Christianity needs to solve. This question is: whether religion really is an opiate or not. In some circles, raising this question is not at all sensible, but I feel this is a question which Chinese Christianity cannot avoid.

When I was very small, many people around me said that religion was an opiate. I think this theological proposition of whether religion is an opiate or not is one which those of us who take theological questions seriously need to respond to. In as far as we are a group of people who conduct research in to religion, we cannot be indifferent to whether this question is true or not. I also believe that our young students are also waiting for us to give them some analysis and help with this. Given that we are all engaged in the re-construction of theological thinking, if we respond to them by saying we also don't know, we also can't be sure, then this will certainly make many church workers, especially young students, feel disappointed.
In recent years, China seems to have been discussing questions to do with religion with enthusiasm. A few years ago, publications such as the "People's Daily", "Wen Hui Bao" and others published many articles about religion. I recall that Comrade Jiang Zemin had one very long article published in "People's Daily" which ran to several pages. Because of his article, the discussion of religious questions within Chinese intellectual circles certainly livened up. However, there was one thing in all this which disappointed me greatly, that is, everybody was avoiding this one question, a question which still has not yet been resolved, and that question is whether religion is, in fact, an opiate or not. The long essays published in the newspapers all avoided this question. Of all the articles I read discussing religion, I only remember seeing one essay published in a university publication on research into minority nationality questions which directly addressed the "opiate" issue. The authors of other articles just did not hold this question in very high regard, it was almost like they were indifferent to it. For those of us who do theological research, especially for those of us in China who do theological research, we know full well that, for a long time now, China has been a country under the leadership of the Communist party and, in this country, opium was once the established definition of religion. But, mysteriously, the question of whether or not religion is an opiate is not talked about anymore, nor does it appear in the papers nowadays. Even if it doesn't appear in the newspapers, this question still exists in the hearts and minds of many Chinese and it still hasn't been resolved adequately. We are theologians, how can we not have a responsibility to solve this question well, thereby having a clear response?

I have browsed through the works of the four authoritative Marxist writers - Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin - and I certainly have not read everything. But it seems to me that Marx himself mentions religion as an opiate of the people in only one of his many essays, and it is not at all clear even there whether he was actually opposing religion per se or whether he was opposing the misuse of religion by the ruling classes. And Marx only made a link between religion and opium one time, he didn't develop an elaborate theory of religion as an opiate. The one who actually speaks most about religion as an opiate is Lenin. Lenin once said that religion having become an opiate was one of Marxism's most fundamental of fundamental points concerning the question of religion, and this view of religion as an opiate thus took on greater prominence within the Marxist movement. Yet the one who gave such prominence to this definition of religion wasn't Marx himself, it was Lenin. Lenin said religion as an opiate was the cornerstone of Marxism's understanding of religion. What Lenin was advocating here, and what Stalin also advocated, almost caused Marxism to turn in to an anti-religious movement. To see whether what I am saying here has any basis, I invite everyone to go back to the original writings, to Marx and Engels' original works. Especially note that what Lenin and Stalin said of religion was very backward, and the harm done was very great, but this wasn't done by Marx, it was done by Lenin and also Stalin. Engels was very interested in this question, and he once wrote a book called "The Peasant War in Germany". In this book, he didn't attack religion, he especially pointed out that, at the time of the peasant war in Germany, there was one peasant leader who used religious language to motivate the peasants to rise up and oppose the land-owning classes. Therefore, in Engels' mind, and in many places, he maintains a fairly cordial attitude towards religion, and he affirms the way religion was of use in spurring on progress during the time of the German peasants' revolt. Therefore, in the original writings of Marx,
Engels, Lenin and Stalin, there is a big difference between Engels' appreciation of religion and the way Lenin and Stalin treat the question of religion. We cannot say that these four all wholeheartedly opposed religion, in their writings we can find many instances where they express appreciation for religion's usefulness. After reflection on these materials, it would come across as a gross oversimplification of this question for anyone to just open their mouths and say that they think that religion is an opiate.

Our seminary is a place where religion is researched, we don't want to not speak about all this at the seminary. We should not keep silent about whether religion is an opiate or not, using silence as a way of avoiding this question. This would be like implying that we agree that religion is an opiate. In 21st century China, if religion is still an opiate then we obviously don't have a leg to stand on concerning the value of religion in the face of all the many different opinions about religion being published in the papers. We want to encourage believers to join together in loving their country. However, if believers call for cherishing one's own motherland under a banner of patriotism but, at the same time, say that religion is an opiate, how can we then be consistent in our thinking? Therefore, I think this question of whether or not religion is an opiate is one which has been handed down to today's Chinese church. It is for this reason that I have put forward this question, one which I myself am constantly thinking about, in order to open it up for everyone to look in to. We truly need to love our country, so this kind of question shouldn't be hidden in the back of our minds, we need to bring it out and, moreover, proceed to solve it. In this way, China may become a place that actually believes religion is not an opiate and, if such a kind of religion were to emerge, would we not welcome this? Having said all this, I don't know if any of this will give rise to discussion or not.

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Conference: Between 9th - 16th May 2005, a conference was held on World Mission and Evangelism in Athens, Greece and organized by the World Council of Churches. The theme of the conference was "Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile - called in Christ to be healing and reconciling communities". Rev. Cao Shengjie, Ms. Chen Meilin and Rev. Kan Baoping from the China Christian Council joined 650 participants in one of the largest gatherings of church representatives and mission organizations in the 21st century so far. The three Chinese participants held a Synexis (workshop) introducing the mission work of the churches in China to other participants who represented the Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Baptist, Independent, United, African Instituted and Pentecostal traditions.

Honorary Doctorate: On 14th May 2005, the University of Helsinki in Finland conferred an honorary doctorate on Rev. Cao Shengjie, President of the China Christian Council, at a ceremony held at the university. This is the first time that the University of Helsinki has extended this honour to someone from China. According to Rev. Cao, it signifies the friendship and respect the Finnish Theological Institute and the churches in Finland have for the church in China.

US Secretary of State: During a 24 hour visit to China on 20th - 21st March 2005, US Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, attended evening worship at Beijing's Gang Washi church. Rev. Zhang Shuqiang led the service and Rev. Chen Yuzhen preached. During the visit, Dr. Rice also visited a children's class at the church and joined them in singing "Yes, Jesus Loves Me". Dr. Rice was presented with a bilingual Bible and hymnal by the church at the end of her visit.

Canadian Church Delegation: On 8th April 2005, a delegation of 11 representatives from the Anglican Church of Canada, the United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church of Canada visited the national CCC / TSPM headquarters in Shanghai. The delegation was led by Anglican Archbishop Andrew Hutchison and was received by Rev. Cao Shengjie and 15 staff of the national CCC / TSPM offices. The visit by the Canadian church delegation comes in response made to a visit to Canadian churches by a CCC / TSPM delegation in 2003.