Steering the church toward raising social awareness

"CCC has an important responsibility to help people to understand the meaning of faith and how faith can respond to practical questions of daily life", says Rev. Cao Shengjie in her interview with ANS. Read how she sees the Council's role in today's China.  

"Coping" with rapid church growth in Henan

Over a sixth of China’s Christian population lives in Henan, but there are only 154 pastors and 560 elders to provide leadership to the more than 6,000 churches and meeting points. Many counties and townships do not have ordained pastors, but the Henan Christian Council perseveres in caring for its flock and training church workers. See Dr. Theresa Carino’s report on church issues in Henan.

Registered and unregistered churches: not a black and white matter

Actually, the religious “market” in China can be red, black or gray, as suggested by Yang Fenggang, an associate professor of Purdue University. In Henan and Beijing, pastors have seen believers cross the invisible lines between registered and unregistered churches. Dr. Theresa Carino's article compiles recent views on religious life in China.
**EDITORIAL**

**Dear Reader,**

Greetings from ten-year-old Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)! For weeks, Hong Kong has celebrated the anniversary of its handover with fireworks and a plethora of cultural events. Main media has interviewed Hong Kong residents asking their views on past achievements and future challenges to the current administration. The interviews seem to indicate that 'one country, two systems' policy has brought about no major changes into Hong Kong people's lives.

In mainland China, 'changing' is one of the most frequently used qualifiers when describing the country's social and economic conditions. In religious circles, 'business as usual' is similarly being redefined. In her interview with ANS, Rev. Cao Shengjie points out that the development of relations between religions and the state has given religious bodies more scope to arrange activities than before. Indeed, the Chinese church has increased efforts to embrace this opportunity: it is open to learn from its history and from its counterparts both in and outside China.

Recent studies indicate that the religious atmosphere in China has changed since the most recent related political landmark, the proclamation of the 'Regulations on Religious Affairs' in 2005. It is yet to be seen how this religious stage with new rules will ultimately look - some current developments are reflected in this issue of ANS.

*With best regards from the editorial desk,*

Elisa Nousiainen
Steering the church towards raising social awareness

After her graduation from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1953, Rev. Cao Shengjie has been involved in hands-on church ministries and academic research on Christianity in the Chinese context. Since her election as President of the China Christian Council in 2002, Rev. Cao’s name has appeared frequently in news reports on Chinese delegations visiting churches overseas and attending international conferences. In early February 2007, Rev. Cao shared with ANS’ editorial team some reflections on the past five years in national level leadership.

**Highlights**

Rev. Cao Shengjie’s response to a question on national and international highlights during her presidency draws attention to events which imply a new kind of openness in Christian initiatives in and outside China.

“Internationally, I would see the Bible Ministry Exhibition of the Chinese Protestant Churches, displayed first in HK in 2004, and then in the US in 2006, as an important event”, says Rev. Cao. “The exhibition illustrates the situation in the Chinese Church through facts and figures; therefore, it is particularly illuminating to those who have limited knowledge of the Chinese situation. Many people, even in Hong Kong, are not aware of what has been done in the Chinese Protestant churches since the 1980’s. This includes printing more than 40 million copies of the Bible. For example in the US, we have many friends who would like to help the Chinese church develop, but don’t know how. There are still fellow Christians who think that smuggling is the only way of getting Bibles to China.”

“In addition, the Bible exhibition was an event of exchange”, continues Rev. Cao. “For example in Atlanta, which belongs to the so called Bible Belt in the US, the Chinese delegation was treated with “southern hospitality” and we had fruitful occasions to share and increase mutual understanding.

> “The Three-self principle does not mean self-isolation, but recognises a need to learn from other churches.”

As for recent developments inside China, Rev. Cao Shengjie mentions the reconstruction of theological thinking, interfaith dialogue and a recent symposium on the Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church:

“The reconstruction of theological thinking is important to overall church development, because it encourages the church to learn how to build itself internally and how to participate in constructing a harmonious society. Generally, the Chinese Church believes in reconciliation and in fostering good relations within the church, with believers of other faiths and with non-believers”, explains Rev. Cao. She develops further the issue of good relations between different religious circles:

“Interfaith dialogue, for instance, is something new in China. There has been some form of cooperation in the past between different religious groups. For example, religious delegates collaborate in the CPPCC (Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference), Chinese Committee on Religions and Peace (CCRP) organises an annual prayer week, and the Society for the Study of Religions (宗教学会) has been founded. In December 2006, the first
symposium on interfaith dialogue was convened in Shanghai. Even if Muslims and Christians in China have always maintained good relations, the symposium was a meaningful event, since it dealt with questions like peace, family ethics, etc and sought points of common understanding.”

The Symposium The Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church was held in Shanghai in November 2006. Rev. Cao describes the main purpose of this symposium as “drawing lessons from the study of church history and developing the church on the basis of that knowledge”. The January issue of Tian Feng magazine published a report on the symposium (ANS XXX) and lists 29 related articles, three of which have subsequently been published in Tian Feng (The summary of Rev. Cao’s closing speech at the symposium is on p. XXX of this issue of ANS). Rev. Cao outlines the significance of the symposium as follows:

“The reviewing of historical events is used as an aid to determine which direction the Chinese church should take. This is important because we cannot develop a church with Chinese characteristics, a church which retains its independence while maintaining its international relations, unless it knows which way it wants to go. The Chinese church needs to go its own way, which is a great challenge at the moment.

The church has opened itself to the outside and consequently, there is a temptation to revive the old links of give-and-get, and to copy directly foreign church practices – what would this lead to?”

The government has given us more space to act, but we have to decide how to act

Even if the relations with churches overseas are a constant topic in the discussions about self-hood and an independent church in China, Rev. Cao acknowledges the need for collaboration and exchange on legal basis:

“International exchange is important for building relationships. The Three-self principle does not mean self-isolation, but recognises a need to learn from other churches. Pastoral counselling, for example, is still in its initial stage in the Chinese church. Social changes have had an impact on families – how can pastors help these people? They would need psychological training, but only a few seminaries offer courses on psychology. To resolve this problem, some seminaries have started seeking partners for exchange. Hopefully, some collaboration on pastoral counselling will be established for example with Fuller Theological seminary which is well-known for its courses on psychology.”

“Other important concerns of the Chinese church are urban migration, social ministry, AIDS-prevention and environmental protection. We need to identify specific needs in China while widening our horizons and learning from other churches how to deal with these problems. The government has given us more space to act, but we have to decide how to act and how to mobilise Christians to take part in these activities. In the past, the church in China has been concerned about individual salvation. It has not had much social awareness which would be reflected in practical church work.”

State and Church

When asked how she sees the current relationship between the state and the church, Rev. Cao responds:

“The relationship has improved. The government has carried out research on religion, which is no longer treated as an “opiate of the people”. At the Plenary meeting in 2006, the Communist Party admitted that religion can play a positive role in building a harmonious society. The government acknowledges that believers are citizens who build the society together with other citizens. They are practical players and government encourages religious circles to act. They have a good social ethos and should not be discriminated against.”

“The China Christian Council also has to play its part in building a harmonious society. CCC has an important responsibility to help people to understand the meaning of faith and how faith can respond to practical questions of daily life. For instance, forgiveness and tolerance are basic Christian values; we need to develop Christian ethics to communicate the essence of the Christian world view, Christian understanding of humankind, etc. from a theological point of view. Theological seminaries such as in Nanjing and Guangdong are already contributing to this. Some graduates from seminaries also study in secular universities.”

The changing religious atmosphere in China can also be seen in people’s changing attitudes to religion. Academics present papers on religious topics and there seems to be a growing interest in religion among the youth.

(Continued on p.17 )
THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT AND THE CHINESE CHURCH

Learn from History to Run the Church Well

An abridged version of the closing speech at the ‘Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church’ academic conference

By Rev Dr Cao Shengjie

This academic conference aims at reflecting on and taking lessons from history in order to run well the Chinese church.

I The Exploitation of the Missionary Movement by Colonialism

The term ‘missionary movement’ as used here refers to the post-16th century movement, particularly that which was initiated by the western world in the 18th and 19th centuries. To my mind, it was closely related to the expansion of western colonialism in many ways:

1. Without the military might of the colonialists in opening the doors of various countries, a worldwide missionary movement would not have been possible.

2. The missionary movement was exploited for the expansion of colonialism – the early colonialists seemed to link themselves with the missionary movement. In that sense, missionaries paved the way for business interests and, simultaneously, became front-line advocates of western culture. Missionaries were closer to the locals and therefore the most reliable sources for “intelligence” gathering. The missionary movement contributed to the maintenance of colonial law and order. General Charles Warren of South Africa observed that to keep the peace between colonialists and natives, one missionary was equivalent to a platoon of soldiers. As far as Chinese Christians are concerned, however, the missionaries’ use of their knowledge of China and the Chinese language to help their countries coerce China into signing unfair and unjust treaties is something that will always remain fresh in their memory. The missionaries advocated extra-territorial rights which undermined Chinese sovereignty. It was not unusual for missionaries to suddenly turn into diplomats and even military officers. The Eight-Power Allied Forces were able to march from Tianjin to Beijing precisely because of the help given by missionaries.

3. The support for colonialism arose out of the needs of the missionary movement. Missionaries like Karl Gutzlaff believed that force was needed to open up China for mission. He said, “There is nothing that can generate in the Chinese people a sense of respect for us than the great canons.”

The relationship between the missionary movement and colonialism brought about negative consequences for Christianity: missionaries brought a sense of self-righteousness and moral superiority; Christianity became linked with colonial expansion; missionaries perhaps unconsciously promoted European superiority and a reaction to it; they brought denominational divisions.

II Understanding Missionaries against the Backdrop of the Missionary Movement

Our discussion is not a critique of Morrison or individual missionaries per se since they all are quite different in terms of their contributions. In the early days of the Three-Self Movement, efforts at classifying all missionaries under the banner of imperialism were extreme, a mistake that was acknowledged at the fiftieth anniversary of the Three-Self Patriotic movement. In matters of principle, missionaries should be evaluated according to what they did in history. For instance, we pay high tribute to Robert Morrison’s contributions to Bible translation and the edition of English-Chinese Dictionary, yet his 25-year service to the East India Company, which connected with opium trafficking, either willingly or unwillingly, was also a gloomy historical fact. Their positive contributions to the Chinese people should not be forgotten. We respect those missionaries who left home and heart to come

“Symposium on the Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church”

Shanghai Nov. 28-30, 2006

Church leaders and academics gathered together in November 2006 to discuss the history and impact of the missionary movement on the Chinese church and culture. Tian Feng, the magazine of the Chinese Protestant Churches, has published a selection of around 30 papers presented at the symposium; the following article is an abridged version of Reverend Cao Shengjie’s closing speech (Tian Feng 2007.2 no 303). The entire collection of these papers will be published at a later date in Chinese and in English.
to China, enduring great difficulties to spread the gospel. Some of them made positive contributions in remote areas, sharing the joys and sorrows of people at the grassroots, helping to develop the local culture and economy and even protecting local people during conflicts, at great risk to themselves. They will always be remembered.

It is necessary to understand the missionaries within the context of the missionary movement. These missionaries were educated in their own homeland, and could not possibly be divorced from their own western culture and thought; and in their passionate missionary activities they too communicated the idea that “western countries are strong because of their belief in God.” They described the Chinese people’s plight, which had been a result of foreign invasion, as a consequence of unbelief. This was in fact a way of covering up the sin of imperial conquest. Quite naturally for them, the acceptance of Christianity entailed a total acceptance of western culture as well. Hence for all that the missionaries had done, their work should still be further analyzed.

III The Negative Influences of the Missionary Movement on the Chinese Church

The exploitation of the missionary movement by colonialism had serious negative consequences:

First, the Chinese church became a mission field of foreign mission agencies. It was a “church in China” but not a “Church of China” and lacked sovereignty. In the 1920’s, there were numerous denominations in China, with each denomination further dividing itself into different agencies according to the countries they represented. The Chinese churches belonged to different “mother churches”. Second, conservative theology had led Chinese Christians to the view that other Chinese who did not believe in Christ were “pagans”, thereby creating a divide between Christians and other Chinese. There was even a saying, “One more Christian, one less Chinese.” Third, by equating Christian culture with western culture, Christianity was perceived as a tool for the occupation of China and the transformation of Chinese culture, creating negative reactions among patriotic Chinese.

Undoubtedly, the missionary movement brought with it the advances of western culture, technology and civilization. It promoted inter-cultural exchanges which we should not negate. Even today, it is important for us to learn what is valuable from other sources of knowledge and technology. However, we need to look at the motivation behind the cultural work of missionaries. In his letter to the British governor in Shanghai in 1899, British missionary Timothy Richard said, “Hundreds and thousands of university students are studying in (American) schools, many of whom will in the future occupy leadership positions in the Chinese government. If we are able to comprehend these people and those from Chinese religious circles, we will have caught the brain and spine of the Chinese”.

The 20th-century Boxer Movement in fact consisted of those Chinese who objected to imperialists and Christianity as well. The character of the 20th century “anti-Christian” movement was in fact “anti-imperial”. As regards the realization of the independent church movement and indigenous efforts of the Chinese church, there was no fundamental success as the church was never free from the control of the mission agencies, even though there were improvements in theological thought, sacred music, art, and the secularization of the architecture of church buildings. In 1949, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China was established, which stood for “self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation”. Since then, the Chinese church has freed itself from the “western church” and achieved far better results than the hundred years of mission by mission agencies. (Even if we go by the incomplete statistics of sixteen million believers, it still is a twenty-fold increase from the 700,000 in 1949). Further, the Chinese church has since removed denominational distinctions, leading to a conceptual change regarding Christianity in Chinese society – more intellectuals and the younger generation have accepted Christian beliefs. This is indeed a very encouraging sign for the future of Chinese Christianity.

IV Lessons for the Chinese Church

First, the sovereignty of the church should rest in the hands of Chinese believers who love both church and country. Although Christianity is universal, it also has its local aspects. We cannot downplay the local under the pretext of Christianity’s universality. This will only lead to an undermining of the authority of the church within its political context. If the Chinese church loses its sovereignty, it will only return to the old days of the missionary movement and become the appendix of foreign churches. We must therefore beware of those
who seek to occupy China under the pretext of mission by attempting to revive the old missionary ideas. Today, there are still anti-China forces outside of China that are making use of the idea of mission, and under the banner of fulfilling the “great commission”, engage in illegal activities in China. Presently, under the support of anti-China forces there are churches overseas that plan and execute their activities in China, which include clandestine evangelization, the use of legal means such as economic activities and publishing in order to expand their influence. Whether clandestine or legal, their purpose is to exert control on the Chinese church according to the agenda of external forces, even to the extent of setting Christianity up against Chinese society and the government. This is a very serious challenge to us.

In the 21st century, the Chinese church continues to face the threat of old mission ideas.

Second, we must undertake theological reconstruction with the purpose of adapting Chinese Christian theology to Chinese culture. The harm done to Chinese Christianity in the days of the missionary movement not only caused the Chinese church to lose its sovereignty, but also caused its ideas and theology to be cut off from reality. Today, much of Chinese Christianology has imbibed western conservative theology, such as the hopelessness of the world, the dichotomy between intellect and faith, the discontinuity between spirituality and practical life, eschatology, and the like. The church is only concerned about personal salvation, and adopts a phlegmatic attitude towards the development of society, social justice and social service, with a special emphasis on the exclusiveness of Christianity. This leads to a disrespect for the faiths of other people, thus causing social disharmony. These problems need rigorous correction.

At present the church has much space to contribute to the development of social harmony. The question is what sort of contributions? While friends from abroad may wish to advance western economy, capitalism, western democracy and governance in China through Christianity, obviously this approach is not appropriate to the culture of harmony in China. While it is true that there is a close relationship between Christianity and western culture, Christianity remains a universal religious faith and is not identical to western culture.

About a hundred years ago, Chinese Christian Chen Mengnan said it well, “This truth (i.e. Christianity) is heavenly truth. When it is overseas, it belongs overseas; but when it is in China, it belongs to China”. When Christianity came to China, it ought to have taken root in Chinese culture. Thus, Chinese Christianity must develop its own system of theological thought.

Third, Christianity should spread the “gospel of peace”. The way in which we evangelize should not run counter to what is in the gospel. One of the greatest failures of the missionary movement is that it made use of all sorts of means to reach its goal - the trafficking of opium, participating in the war of invasion and in the unfair signing of treaties, as long as these helped to open up China. How will the people of China be willing to accept such a gospel?

In the 21st century, the Chinese church continues to face the threat of old mission ideas. There are those from some overseas churches who have been gathering and consolidating themselves, with the hope of becoming the biggest sending agency. In his book Jesus in Beijing, David Aikman, the former Time magazine journalist, said that if 30 per cent of the Chinese population became Christian, the political, cultural and military sectors in China would have a “Christian world view”. It would seem that it is not so much about the salvation of more Chinese souls, but more about American political advantage.

We understand that there are many godly Christians who, however, fail to understand the developmental condition in China. How are they to grasp the needs of the Chinese people? It is hoped that they would seriously listen to what the Chinese Christians have to say from their own analysis of the history of the missionary movement. They should seriously consider how they may truly help the Chinese people come to know the gospel, making use of appropriate methods and with full respect for the Three-Self principle of the Chinese church. They should try to lend support to the ministry of the Chinese church, without repeating the mistake of allowing “the end justify the means” and getting involved in illegal activities.

Fourth, the future of Chinese Christianity is in the hands of the Chinese Christians themselves. In an age of openness, it is easy for some of the old ideas of mission, denominationalism and theology that is devoid of social concerns to re-enter the Chinese scene under the cover of “being faithful to tradition”. Indeed, Chinese
Christians must remain faithful to the Tradition that has been passed on from the apostles; but some of the social traditions of the west may not necessarily be inherited by us.

The future of Chinese Christianity lies in growing roots in Chinese soil so that it will be welcomed by the people and accepted as a strength in society’s development. The church must equip itself, recognize clearly the direction of the times, face the problems that result from social changes and thus be prepared to give a satisfactory response to those compatriots seeking the spiritual meaning of life.

Theologians and churches in various countries have their different responses to the challenges of globalization and post-modernism. The Chinese church must know how to differentiate among different theologies and imbibe those aspects that are beneficial to the needs of our country. We should have more dialogues and exchanges so as to develop a Chinese church that is pleasing to both God and humankind.

“Coping” with rapid church growth in Henan

The major part of Henan province lies to the south of the Yellow River, as its name indicates (河南：‘river south’). Thanks to the river, this province is the most important producer of wheat in the country. Henan also has the most "abundant" population of any Chinese administrative region, with nearly 100 million people. With a view to the Christian population, Henan also ranks the first among Chinese provinces. Dr. Theresa Carino, coordinator of the Amity Foundation Hong Kong Office, visited Henan in April, 2007; in the following article she outlines some of the challenges which the growth of Christianity poses to churches in Henan.

Trained Personnel Sorely Needed in Rural Churches

Home to 98 million people, Henan is one of the most densely populated provinces in China. It also holds over a sixth of China’s Christian population, thus having the highest number of Christians in any province. Henan’s Christian leaders celebrate the “bountiful harvest” of more than 2.63 million but worry about some of the challenges this brings to the church. With only 154 pastors and 560 elders to provide leadership to more than 6,000 churches and meeting points spread throughout the province, there are many counties and townships that do not in fact have pastors. For provincial church leaders, the training of clergy, lay leaders and evangelists is a top priority in providing adequate leadership to the vast majority of rural congregations. This is especially urgent since sects and cults like the Eastern Lightning are very active in highly agricultural Henan. The Eastern Lightning, for instance, claims that the second coming of Christ has taken place and is revealed in the form of a female Christ who has appeared in China. In 1998, a number of cases were reported from Henan in which people resisting the sect had been drugged and beaten. (See: *Revealing The Real Face Of Eastern Lightning* in ANS 2003.9/10.3)

Preaching Teams Ensure Quality

In response to such challenges, the Henan Christian Council has adopted a two-pronged approach by first strengthening theological education and secondly, organizing “preaching teams” that are sent out to village churches and meeting points “on request”. According to Rev. Tang Weimin, head of the provincial Christian Council, these preaching teams help to meet believers’ needs in rural areas lacking money to run lay training courses. The team members, which presently number around 70, must be seminary graduates. They work in their own localities and are called upon, when needed, to go to the rural areas to teach and to preach.

Asked about the reasons for the explosive church growth in Henan, Rev. Tang explained that the naturally large population was a factor but more important was the fact that Christian believers are very fervent evangelists. There are more than 6,000 evangelists who spread the gospel message in Henan and often beyond its borders. In addition, he believes that social witness, through forms of social service, help to spread the gospel message through action. The positive moral behaviour of most Christians has been a drawing force for the religion. Rev. Tang observed that very often, those who become Christians undergo
a “character transformation” and give up their “bad habits”, which makes a positive impact on their families and community. In a relatively poor and densely populated province where there is a lack of social security and little access to health care, many become Christians after a “healing experience”. There are many who will readily testify to personal experiences of healing and transformation through prayers. According to Tang, the church provides fellowship and helps to fill spiritual and psychological gaps.

**Expanding Theological Education**

In its work, the Henan Christian Council emphasizes resource sharing among churches and countering the heretical teachings of groups such as the Eastern Lightning. Lay training and theological education remain top priorities. Playing a pivotal role in the theological development of the church is the Henan Bible School. (See also: Henan Bible School Adjusts to Changing Times and Needs in ANS 2006.5/6.6)

It had its early beginnings in a small place in Luoyang which used to be the old provincial capital. It moved to Zhengzhou City, Henan’s present capital, in 1993 when one of the Christians there donated his home for use as a bible school. In 1997, urban redevelopment forced the Bible School to relocate. Since then, it has moved several times until its present site was found in 1999.

Located in the outskirts of Zhengzhou City, the Bible School campus is modest and has a few buildings, including a chapel, that serve as classrooms and dormitories, sharing space with the Henan Christian Council. The main campus has a current enrollment of 200 students. As in most seminaries and bible schools in China today, the demand exceeds supply and there would be more than 200 applicants for 60 new places every year. Students have to complete a total of 42 courses over a period of two years, under the tutelage of a faculty consisting of 8 fulltime and 10 part-time teachers. The present curriculum covers biblical studies, theology and cultural subjects such as music and Christian Art. It was evident that Henan Christians love to sing for during our visit the campus was filled with the sound of choirs at practice. The council has put together a set of DVDs that has the whole book of Psalms in music.

In addition to the main campus in Zhengzhou City, the seminary now runs two satellite campuses in Jiaozhuo and Suitang which together have 200 students.

According to Rev. Tang, who is also principal of the seminary, the Henan Bible School can now enrol a total of 400 students. More than 1,000 have graduated over the years. In a further push forward, the Bible school is now trying to upgrade from a two-year to a three-year program. There will be hurdles to clear before this can be achieved, one of which is having adequate library facilities. The Bible School has a meagre collection of 3,000 books while the national standard for seminaries is at least 8,000 books. The dean of studies admits there is inadequate coverage of theological and cultural subjects in the curriculum. He anticipates that the problems and curricula of seminaries and bible schools will be discussed and addressed at a meeting of all schools and seminaries convened by the Theological Commission of the CCC/TSPM.

**Word and Action Bring Hope**

Despite tough economic conditions in the rural areas, 60% of Bible school graduates return to their hometowns. Like many of their counterparts in less developed provinces, Henan’s pastors earn only around 1,000 RMB (roughly US$130) per month. Church collections for the first Sunday in May is used for the income of preachers. In rural areas, where cash is rare, many Bible School graduates end up working as volunteers in their churches. Most of them continue to earn their living from farming and preach in church on Sundays.

Church personnel are compelled by the poverty around them to provide desperately needed social services. In recent years, many of the poorest areas in Henan have been severely affected by the HIV/AIDS virus spread mainly through unhygienic practices in the sale of blood to illegal “bloodheads”. Entire village populations have been affected. Working with the CCC/TSPM and the Amity Foundation, the provincial Christian Council has been involved in HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention training, supporting orphans and providing means of livelihood for people affected by AIDS.

These interventions have been greatly appreciated by local communities and there are many cases in which people join the church after witnessing the social impact it has made. In an environment of rapid change and a growing gap between rich and poor, the church in Henan tries to bring a message of hope through music, preaching, worship and social action.
Registered and unregistered churches: not a black and white matter

“We have reached a common ground.”

When surveying the religious landscape in China, the western media has a habit of labelling the China Christian Council and its member churches as the “official” or “state” church while referring to unregistered churches as “house churches”. The dual categorization used to be sharper, juxtaposing the “state-sanctioned” churches to the “underground churches”. These sharp, black and white distinctions do not really correspond with the changing realities in China today.

In an interview with a pastor in Beijing two years ago, I was told that some of the leaders of “house churches” had sent feelers to her for possible cooperation. One of them had, unknown to her, attended a Sunday worship at her church, brought there by a member of the congregation. He had, apparently, been moved to tears by the worship service and had commented, “This is exactly how we worship too! There is very little difference between us.” He had then requested for a meeting with the pastor. In Sichuan, I have been informed by a local pastor that she visits house churches where she serves communion on communion Sundays. She stated emphatically that members of unregistered churches are also welcome to attend the lay training courses her church organizes and quite a few have in fact done so.

In Henan, where there is probably the largest number of unregistered churches, the Henan Christian Council has been reaching out to the members of house churches. According to Rev. Tang Weimin, the president of the Henan Christian Council, most of the unregistered churches are located in southern Henan, in the Nanyang area. In recent years, the council has made an effort to contact them and he believes they have moved from a situation of misunderstanding to understanding. One illustration of this effort has been the free distribution of more than 3,000 bibles to members of unregistered churches. He said that in the past, house church members used to oppose those belonging to the CCC/TSPM network. Today, there is much less antagonism and church personnel can work in both registered and unregistered churches. According to Rev. Tang, “We have reached a common ground.” As proof of this significant change in attitude, he refers to the internet where there is, in his opinion, a decrease in hostility and opposition to the Henan Christian Council. Groups of house churches may still maintain their disagreements with the CCC/TSPM but they do not actively oppose the churches that are its members. There are increasing indications
that Christians from unregistered churches are seeking and receiving theological education in registered seminaries and bible schools in some provinces.

**Red, Black and Grey**

Commenting on the changes that are going on, Zhuo Xinpeng, director of the Institute of World Religions in Beijing, has noted that some scholars on Christianity in China have used the “market approach” to analyze the religious situation. Yang Fenggang of Purdue University has written about the “red, black and grey markets” of religion in China. Yang won an award from the American Sociological Association for his article, “The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China” (The Sociological Quarterly 47:1)

In an interview with *Religion Weekly* (Zong Jiao Zhou Kan) Yang explained that a “red market” consists of the officially permitted religions, a black market refers to those religions that are banned or are considered “illegal” and a gray market refers to religions with an ambiguous legal and sometimes non-legal status. The gray market concept stresses non-institutionalized religiosity. According to Yang, the market approach to the study of religion puts its stress on the practice of religion and argues that religious practices change in response to the demand for it. In China, though, he believes that the religious situation is not only an issue of market demand, but also directly related to the country’s religious policy which makes the market for religion more complex, and has produced the three markets for religion. Each market has its own special dynamics.

In his observation, since 1949, the red market has grown. He believes that the black market has been controlled but has grown quite a bit. In comparison, the gray market is very large. It is also the least manageable because the collective needs and activities it encompasses fall into a zone that is neither legal nor illegal, conforming to some laws but not conforming to others. A large portion of the gray market satisfies religious needs but does not necessarily arise in the name of religion. Yang believes that the stricter the control of religion, the larger the gray market. He thinks that in the development of China’s religions, the red market will expand and that there is the possibility of the gray turning into red. As religious circles engage in new activities, there is research by academic circles, which then propose suggestions to which the government responds by making adjustments.

Changes in policy are happening, observes Dr. Zhuo Xinpeng. For instance, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) has established, in recent years, a department on Folk Religion, an indicator of the growing importance of popular or folk religions in China. Regulations about registration are not as rigid as some critics might insist. Among the Protestant Christians, an official in charge of religious affairs has said that while the bigger house churches should register, the smaller ones need not do so. It was also explained to us during a visit to SARA, that being

> “This is exactly how we worship too! There is very little difference between us.”

members of the CCC/TSPM is not necessarily a precondition for registration. Some local churches which have kept out of the network of the CCC/TSPM have registered themselves with the government and this has been going on for several years.

Speaking to media about his official China visit in 2006, Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, made an important observation about the changes in relations between Christians from registered churches and those from the so-called “house churches”: “I would also say, though, that the black and white picture that we often receive in the west that there is an underground church, there is an official church, it does not correspond to what we’ve encountered. There is a range of Christian activity, there is a visible church presence, there are a number of Christian groups that are unregistered or not yet registered, some which would not want to register, some which would like to but are frustrated by the regulations, some which have particular reservations; it is a very, very broad spectrum and, what should I say, the crossover between membership or affiliation, in especially rural areas between registered and unregistered is by no means a clear-cut matter.” Indeed, many observers would hope that more and more of the rapidly growing number of Christians in China will “find the common ground.”

Author: Dr. Theresa Carino
Warm winter charity is blossoming in Shanghai

The Annual Shanghai Community Church
Bazaar for Charity

"It was a Shanghai winter day, with bright sunshine, a multitude of bright faces and an abundance of handicrafts for sale. On December 24, 2006, the annual Shanghai Community Church Bazaar for Charity opened. Winter’s cold weather was offset by the warm radiance of a freshly decorated church buzzing with good will and activity", writes a reporter of Tian Feng in the March issue of this magazine of the Chinese Protestant churches (Tian Feng 2007.3, issue number 305). Cordelia Leong has translated the report of this fundraising event summarised below.

The Bazaar is now in its 13th year. The initial catalyst came in 1994, when a devastating earthquake struck Yunnan province. When the news of that tragedy reached the Shanghai Community Church, everyone prayed heartily and earnestly for God’s guidance on how to help their brothers and sisters in Yunnan. A fundraising event came into focus. Christians in the community donated whatever they could: material goods, money, time and effort. This isolated activity of love sparked what has become an organized charity which seeks out new needs to address. The focus has evolved from initially helping Christian communities in need, to becoming a more broad and inclusive concern. It has fostered an enlarged understanding of Jesus’ words, “Love one another”.

In this case, “love” means hard work. The Bazaar has reached a scale now that requires two months of busy preparation to make it succeed; there is the promotion work, the collection of items to sell, categorization and storage, as well as rehearsals for performers, arrangements for food and beverages, decorations, setting up venue equipment, etc.

Donated items come in all varieties, from hand-knitted scarves from an 80-year-old parishioner, to a very expensive wedding gift donated to the cause. There is a local Christian sister who is a painter and donates a fine traditional Chinese painting every year. Once the event begins, there is a never-ending stream of folks from all walks of life coming through, old and young, believers and non-believers, the faithful and the curious.

Reverend Shen Cheng-en, the vice president of the China Christian Council and senior pastor of the Shanghai Community Church, pleasantly expressed his gratefulness when he talked about the Bazaar. He said they were grateful to the pastors and the Christian brothers and sisters working on the bazaar ministries for their

If you are interested in Chinese theology, read the Chinese Theological Review (CTR). CTR provides an excellent follow-up of theological discussion in China. Details on the Amity News Service website: www.amitynewsservice.org
co-operation and team spirit. He noted that their humbleness and faithfulness towards God was substantial and practical. The effectiveness in the coordination of all the behind-the-scenes work was well-appreciated: collection of the donated items in the cold weather, stock-checking and pricing at the storehouses, food preparation at the kitchens, setting up the venue, etc.

Rev. Shen reminded us that the Lord bestows upon people talents of different natures, and that He wants them to use the talents in a complementary combination in their ministry. Those who worked together to make the Bazaar happen definitely showed themselves to be a graceful, talented team.

Through social activities like this, Shanghai Community Church has engaged the local community, and others in the neighborhood have come to learn from the church’s experience in organizing events and have also invited the church to be a part of their own similar activities. Here, another channel has opened to share God’s love and grace outside the walls of the church.

Miss Chen, who supervised this year’s Bazaar, and Mr Cai, a committee member of the church, both said that the management of the bazaar was continuously improving, as is the enthusiasm of the church members in the activity, and also the quality of donated items. Since 2000, there has been an auction included, using the more expensive donated paintings and antiques.

Target recipients of the proceeds are: Christians in desperate financial condition; people who live below the minimal living standard; victims of crisis or catastrophe; those suffering from serious health problems or disability, and other similar social charity projects. The collected funds are not saved up, but are distributed to those in need in the shortest possible time.

The church bazaar is one channel through which religious organizations can develop social services. In recent years, Chinese churches have worked hard to develop social services and charity work that is focused more on the greater society’s needs, rather than clinging to old attitudes of self-preservation that only served to build walls of exclusion. Professor Duan Qi, a researcher at the Institute of World Religions, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, has also confirmed that Chinese churches are giving much effort to leading Christians to care more about their Chinese society. A new generation of more socially responsible Christians is being nurtured in the church, and events such as the Shanghai Community Church Bazaar for Charity are helping to spread that salt and light through the country.
Chinese Christians’ New Prosperity Is a Challenge: Gao Feng

“Coping with wealth needs to be learned”, said Rev. Gao Feng, president of the Shandong Christian Council. He spoke during a visit to the Kirchentag, the largest event of the Protestant church in Germany. “Chinese Christians used to belong to the poorest social class; however, as a result of the rapid economic expansion in China, a lot of them have recently become rich. Their new prosperity has become an unprecedented challenge to the church in China”, Rev. Gao pointed out. “Although the Bible teaches that wealth is a gift from God, individual Christians still have to learn to donate for social purposes and spend their money responsibly. Speaking out against widespread corruption and the widening gap between the rich and the poor in China is the duty of Christians. The Chinese church is working to find a balance between rich and poor parishes”, Rev. Gao said.

About 1 percent of the 100 million people living in Shandong, Rev. Gao’s home province, are Protestant Christians. Rev. Gao explained that his church is engaged in the fight for social justice and also, increasingly, in taking responsibility for the protection of environment and the use of natural resources.

Rev. Gao Feng pointed out that especially the Protestant church is very attractive in China because Christians have made important contributions to caring for the sick, the elderly and the disabled. This Chinese theologian, who is a leading member of the China Christian Council (CCC), gave a speech on “The Christian message and economic growth in China” in front of pastors and parishioners in the German city of Hannover earlier this month. He is visiting Germany on invitation of EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, the umbrella organisation of German Protestant churches) and is a guest of honour at the Kirchentag church conference in Cologne. (http://www.amitynewservice.org/page.php?page=1821, translation by Dr. Oliver Engelen)
China at the Kirchentag

Germans have already become familiar with large Chinese delegations at international trade fairs and at technological exhibitions, but this time, tones of the Chinese language resounded at Germany’s largest church event, the Protestant Kirchentag. The Chinese official Protestant church had an 800 square meter exhibition area at the Kirchentag in Cologne, presenting itself in a colourful and confident way with an exhibition titled “God’s Word in China”. Some seventy diagrams gave visitors an impression about the history and the propagation of the Bible. During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960’s and 1970’s almost all Bibles had been destroyed in China. However, since the 1980’s more than 43 million copies of the Bible have been printed at the Amity Printing Press in Nanjing and distributed at very low prices. The distribution of the Bible all over China has played an important part in the rapid growth of the church, which today has 16 million members, according to official statistics.

The Bible exhibition was displayed at the Kirchentag on invitation of EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, the umbrella organisation of German Protestant churches). Last year it was on display in the USA. A high-ranking delegation, led by the president of the China Christian Council (CCC), Rev. Dr. Cao Shengjie, traveled with the exhibition and met German church representatives. Rev. Cao led a Bible study during the Kirchentag, too.

By inviting the CCC, EKD has given the official Protestant church of China an opportunity to present itself to a wide audience in Germany. “The Kirchentag is the best platform for this,” Bishop Martin Schindelhütte explained when he welcomed the delegation on behalf of EKD, “and we hope that a lot of Kirchentag visitors will use this chance to find out more about the Chinese church.” Every visitor to the Chinese Bible exhibition was given a free copy of the Gospel according to Luke in both German and Chinese as a souvenir. More than a million visitors attended the Kirchentag. After Cologne, the exhibition traveled to Neuendettelsau where it will be on display until mid-July.

For more details, see the website of the Chinese Protestant Churches at http://www.chineseprotestantchurch.org.cn/english/

Dr. Kobia praises ‘Three-Self’ and unity in worship

Dr. Samuel Kobia, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), visited China in November 2006 at the official invitation of the CCC/TSPM. He was deeply impressed by the large number of bibles that have been produced in China (more than 40 million). He asserted that without the Chinese church’s participation, the WCC and the ecumenical movement would be a much poorer fellowship. The experience of being a “post-denominational” church is unique to China, said Dr. Kobia, and he hopes that in the 21st century, the Chinese church will become more active in the ecumenical movement. Below is an abridged version of an interview of Dr. Kobia by Tian Feng reporters, Fang Ying and Wan Wei. The interview was published in Tian Feng’s January 2007 issue number 301, and translated by Peter Lian.

[R=reporter; DSK=Dr. Samuel Kobia]

R: We know this is your first trip to China. What have been your deepest impressions about your brief visit here?

DSK: This is my first visit to China, a trip I had been longing for some time. The world is enthralled by China. I’m awed by your nation’s remarkable development and transformation. With respect to the church, my main impression is the tremendous surge in the number of Christians. My second impression is the great vitality of the church. Its social immersion is beyond my imagination. Before arriving in China, I didn’t know that the Chinese church has been enmeshed in so many social development programs. I was unaware of its involvement in the care and concern for the poor. This shows the broad and intimate relationship between your church and society.

R: Has this trip deepened your understanding of the ‘Three-Self’ principle? Can you give us your views?

DSK: Yes, definitely. From what I see, the ‘Three-Self’ principle has been most crucial in invigorating the Chinese church. Coming to China has heightened my understanding. Though my meeting with Bishop Ting has been brief, I have a better insight as to the significance of the ‘Three-Self’ principle to the Chinese church. Its importance lies in bringing about the development of theological inquiry in the Chinese church. The Chinese church has grown roots in its
own native soil, something significant for the Chinese people and which owes much to the ‘Three-Self’ principle.

**R:** We know that your visit has taken you to local churches where you gave talks and held discussions with pastors. Can you share your experience?

**DSK:** I can say that attending the previous Sunday service in Beijing allowed me to appreciate the circumstances surrounding Chinese worship. It’s a very moving experience. We joined children acquiring basic knowledge about Christianity. The Sunday school teacher’s method of instruction was very effective. We saw many youth in church. We live in Europe where it is uncommon to find youth going to church. Instead, only seniors attend church. Your church has children, young adults right up to seniors, all ages, even women, predicating an enormous future development for your church. Fervor especially among the young people portends a bright future for the Chinese church. I’m so glad to come and see all these.

**R:** What are your views regarding current efforts at Chinese theological reconstruction? May we hear your suggestions?

**DSK:** I think theological reconstruction is absolutely necessary under the current situation in China. For a church to practice ‘self-understanding’, there must be a theology that is meaningful for the people. Theological reconstruction helps a theologian explain clearly the theology emerging from its context.

To have a theology with enduring significance, a church that is involved with society must have a contextual theology. In China, contextual theology is derived from a process of theological reconstruction. Furthermore, being post-denominational, the church should not derive its theology from Europe or America but must develop its own theology. A post-denominational Chinese church wanting to have a closer relationship with society would not be served by foreign theologies that will not lead it to any meaningful involvement with society. China needs an indigenous, contextual theology, not one borrowed from abroad. These factors make theological reconstruction absolutely inevitable and essential. I hope Chinese seminaries, particularly the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, will help deepen the understanding of theological reconstruction among students. In turn, they can help refresh the thinking of older colleagues who had studied overseas. Renewal in thinking is equally important for both the old and the young.

**R:** Bishop Ting has declared: “God is love”. What is your view?

**DSK:** I completely agree with Bishop Ting’s thesis. The Chinese church should know people’s needs, understand society and offer love. Elsewhere I have also discussed God and His love. Christ sacrificed Himself for the world. And what was His intent? To ensure that love abides in society and the world. This is very important for all Chinese people and the world at large, just as Bishop Ting has stated in his book: “God is love”.

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**Dr. Kobia at the Nanjing Amity Printing Company**

**R:** People around the world presently face common issues such as environmental protection, war, and terrorism. Could you tell us what the WCC has done in addressing these problems, and how it can contribute to world peace and development?

**DSK:** Of all the perils faced by humankind in this 21st Century, two are featured as most pernicious to life on earth. One is violence. Violence is threatening everyone in society. Violence in the family indicates that even children find difficulty living and growing in a loving environment. Violence against women, so rampant in many areas of Africa, has resulted in mothers failing to bring up children with loving care. Violence in the cities and society has given rise to unwieldy human relations.

(Continued on p.19)
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Jia Qinglin presides over annual gathering of Chinese religious leaders

Jia Qinglin, chairman of the Political Consultative Conference and committee member of the Politbureau of the Communist Party of China, invited religious leaders nationwide to the Central Government Offices to celebrate the coming of the traditional Chinese Spring Festival together. The meeting is an annual event to look back to past year’s activities, set new goals and exchange New Year’s greetings.

In his speech, Jia Qing Lin pointed out that in 2006, the common efforts of secular institutions and religious groups have contributed to creating a socio-political environment beneficial to the whole nation’s development. With a view to the new year 2007, he brought forth four areas in which religious bodies could be of constructive service: 1) Religions can serve social development through advocacy of racial unity among the different religious groups and through support of government against external dividing forces. 2) Religions can bridge the gap between the religious public and the non-religious public to shoulder social responsibilities in unity. 3) The different religious groups can enhance respect and understanding among each other by encouraging dialogue and communication. 4) The positive elements of the various religions can be generally encouraged and cultivated, e.g. behavioural disciplines that are beneficial to harmony.

Presbyter Ji Jianhong, chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) spoke on behalf of the TSPM and the Chinese Christian Council (CCC). With regard to last year’s achievements, he mentioned the successful tour of the Chinese Bible Exhibition in the U.S.A, “The Missionary”

(Cao Shengjie interview, continued from p.4)

Rev. Cao Shengjie expounds on the current situation of Chinese youth:

“Young people are seeking a way of life and looking for answers in religion, philosophy, etc. In other words, they are seeking values in the midst of material affluence. The social environment is more relaxed than in the past, and therefore people feel comfortable to approach religions. Young people are interested in Western culture, and study the Bible from the cultural perspective. This poses a challenge to the Chinese Church: Christianity does not equate with Western culture. Hopefully, the youth can accept Christianity as an expression of Chinese culture.”

While interpreting Christianity to secular society, the China Christian Council caters for needs arising from grassroots churches. Being a national level organisation in a large country, the CCC cannot deal with problems of individual churches, but it offers assistance mainly in the form of publications. It publishes series of sermons and material on evangelisation in order to help pastors approach their congregations and answer a growing range of seekers’ questions. Church administration is yet another area in which the national organisation can help.

“Church management may create problems because people are not trained leaders; management is something you need to learn! In some areas, the lay leaders play a very important role, to the extent of overshadowing theological students. The national level gives guidelines on how to work as a team, and on how to deal with leaders and on how to organise church work. Churches also need to develop their worship styles – Sunday service entails more than a gathering of people who pray together and choose at random a passage in the Bible or a hymn”, explains Rev. Cao.

At the beginning of her presidency, Rev. Cao brought forth women’s ministry as an area she wished to develop in the coming years. When asked about the current situation of women’s ministry in the Chinese church, Rev. Cao expressed her sincere regrets that she has not done more for women.

“Perhaps my position as the national president has encouraged local and provincial Christian councils to elect women in leading roles. Women are ordained and they are in charge of many things, e.g. social services. Many women retire early and start working as volunteers in their churches. However, they would still need more support and guidance, they would need to be empowered: if they had the consciousness to serve, they would do more than they do now.”

At the end of her interview, Rev. Cao expressed appreciation to ANS’ readers for their concern and support for the Chinese church. She hopes that readers will retain their interest and support in the future.

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Movement and the Chinese Church” symposium, and measures to promote theological reconstruction and to standardise theological education. Furthermore, he affirmed the importance and great impact of the visits of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Samuel Kobia. As for new goals of the year 2007, Presbyter Ji mentioned increased involvement in social service and in enhancement of diplomatic relations toward the outside world. (TF 2007,3 no 305)

China on its way to religious harmony and coexistence

The following report from government-sanctioned Xinhua Net was published in Tian Feng’s April 2007 issue number 307. Translation by Dr. Beate Engelen.

The National People’s Congress (NPC) calls attention to harmonious coexistence of the “five religions” in an officially atheist China

According to a Xinhua Net report, leaders of the five official religions in China met in Beijing in March of this year to attend the annual meeting of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). They represented some 100 million religious believers from the following “Five Religions”: Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic being seen as two religions) and Islam.

During the conference’s first group meeting of religious committee members, the religious leaders unanimously chose “harmonious society” as the subject of their statements. The president of the Buddhist Association, Master Yi Cheng, said that the Buddhist “concept of harmony and mercy” can play a unique role in promoting the idea of a harmonious society. Ding Wenfang, vice president of the Islamic Association of China, said that the Islamic idea of “Happiness in Two Worlds” encourages people to be part of social harmony. The vice president of the Daoist Association of China Huang Xinyang said that Daoism has all along considered “unity in love and equality among all living beings” as the principle of people’s conduct in society. Although everybody had a different point of view, the atmosphere was very relaxed. Deng Fucun, vice president of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee said: It was not only this meeting that reminded me of Confucius’ saying, “The noble person promotes harmony but does not conform” (君子和而不同, Analects 23,23). This could also be said in general about the different religions in China existing side by side.

Today, contradictions and conflicts between religions have become a destabilizing factor in several countries or regions, while believers in China have kept a harmonious relationship with each other. According to the national representative and abbot of the Shaolin Monastery, Master Shi Yongxin, “The aim of the Chinese Communist Party and Government to create a harmonious society is also the goal of our religious communities.” This common patriotic conviction enabled each of the big religious groups to agree on numerous issues without prior consultation. Earlier, in 1994, the representatives of the “five religions” had formed a Chinese Committee on Religion and Peace in order to promote “friendship, peace, development and cooperation”.

“The noble person promotes harmony but does not conform”

During the CPPCC, the religious representatives and committee members generally agreed with Prime Minister Wen Jiabao’s report on government work and this year’s target deployment, offering advice and suggestions. Committee member Liu Bainian, vice president of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, suggested placing Bibles in hotels which will receive foreign guests during the Olympic Games in 2008.

Master Gen Tong, vice president of the Buddhist Association of China, proposed to draft a “law against religious cults” as quickly as possible. Apart from these, many more suggestions where put forward by religious representatives concerning the New Socialist Countryside, environmental protection, the rich-poor gap and many more.

Currently, nearly 170,000 religious believers serve on all levels of the NPC and the CPPCC. Each year, they make a great number of suggestions on issues related to national economic and social development and on religious self-construction. “Religions are different from each other in terms of origin, historical development and current situation. This is why one religion can be practiced differently in different regions or countries. Even though discrepancies exist between religions, this doesn’t mean that they cannot coexist,” said Xue Cheng, vice president of the Buddhist Association of China.

Religious believers attribute this harmonious coexistence to a proper religious policy. Even though
Communist cadres and ordinary party members have to be atheists in China, the constitution formulated by party leaders strictly guarantees that citizens enjoy religious freedom and that the country protects regular religious activities. Deng Fucun said: “The Communist Party has created good conditions for a harmonious coexistence of China’s ‘Five Religions.’”

According to still incomplete statistics, the central government has allocated more than RMB 140 million (approx USD 18.4 million) to the maintenance of Buddhist and Daoist monasteries, including the preservation of Tibet’s Potala, which was supported with RMB 35 million (approx USD 4.6 million). Local governments on all levels have received a considerable portion of funds. However, the central government is also determined not to allow any person to illegally engage in splitting the nation or creating social upheaval under the banner of religion.

Li Xianping, director of the Research Center on Religion and Peace at Shanghai University, who has researched China’s religious situation, said: “China is in the process of forming a unique environment for harmonious religious coexistence.”

(Samuel Kobia interview, continued from p.16)

At the micro-level, violence prevails. But peril lurks, on the macro-scale, culminating perhaps in a nuclear arms race, and God-forbid, a nuclear war. Violence is also the cause of terrorism on many levels. As acts of terrorism spread, more innocent lives will be lost. If terrorists get their hands on nuclear weapons, the degree of peril is even more unimaginable, because they’ll use suicidal methods to decimate all those who had hurt them. For this very reason, the WCC has launched a campaign called “The Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010”.

There’s another peril that confronts us all. Its vast scope threatens all mankind, despoiling human lives, affecting climate change, damaging environment, and destroying flora and fauna. The WCC has launched a program regarding climate change, the result of over 20 years of involvement. We strongly feel that we should unite people in recognizing the damage done to the environment and that is already affecting the quality and the quantity of life globally. Active cooperation is called for between people all over the world. This is why we staunchly support the “Kyoto Protocol”, a pact signed 7 years ago. We must take a step beyond this accord. As a church, we have no option but to be prepared to work with countries facing problems of global warming. When God created the world, He saw all that He had made was good. Humankind, that includes us Christians, was appointed His steward on earth to take care of all created things. It is the duty of every church and of every Christian to exert his or her utmost to ensure the world will not suffer desolation, needless violence, and the devastation of other living things.
BOOK REVIEW

The Glorious Church
by Ji Jian Hong

Chinese edition copyright 2006 by Olive, a division of CCLM, based in Taiwan. 320 pages.

The book is probably one of the first by a Chinese Church leader in the People's Republic of China to be published in Taiwan. As noted by the publisher, mutual understanding between the Chinese living on both sides of the Taiwan Straits has gradually increased since the 1980s. However, with regard to the development of Christianity in mainland China, much of the information received in Taiwan by Christians has been mainly from secondary sources. The aim of the book is to provide more understanding on issues related to how the word of God has been received in China; what are the perspectives on the Church's development; what is the understanding of the relationship between Christian faith and the love of country; how can a more Chinese theology be developed and what are the ways of building up the church.

Themes that are covered in the book include the nature of the church, the Spirit and its work, the origins of Three Self and building up the Church, theological reconstruction and Church management.

According to the publisher, the writings of Presbyter Ji Jian Hong, chair of the National CCC/TSPM, provide a reflection and a range of vision on the current situation of the church in the mainland. Hopefully, this will help raise the level of understanding of the church in mainland China among Christians in Taiwan and Chinese Christians around the world.