“[Christianity’s] good image consists of taking a positive attitude and engaging in every project of building up society, by treating persons and situations with tolerance, by seeing gain and loss as normal, serving society with grateful hearts and being a blessing to humankind.”
Dear Reader,

Since the inception of Theological Reconstruction in 1998, seminars have been held throughout the country to introduce the concept and stress the need for opening up theological ideas to respond to the challenges of the times and issues in the continuing development of the churches of China. From a renewed effort to divest Chinese theological thinking of received viewpoints imported by conservative western missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries, Theological Reconstruction has gone on to emphasize putting the Christian message into concepts and language the broader populace can understand and pursuing a new synthesis of the best of Chinese culture and thought with Christian thought and faith. In the last few years, the government emphasis on building a harmonious society has been enthusiastically received in the church as an area in which Christians can make a valuable and visible contribution to the nation’s future. Two recent events have further highlighted the Christian role and contribution in Chinese society. Christian relief work in the aftermath of the terrible earthquake in Sichuan (ANS 19. 7-9) and the participation of Christian torchbearers in the Olympic Torch relay (ANS 19. 7-9) have demonstrated their full participation in modern Chinese society, as they “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.” As Theological Reconstruction is more deeply pondered and elaborated, it is being developed in new ways to enliven not only the theological thinking of theologians, but the practical work of clergy in the church and the day to day spiritual lives of Christians.

In this issue, you will find Bishop K.H. Ting’s remarks at the meeting to mark this tenth anniversary of Theological Reconstruction held November 11-13 in Nanjing, an address on the work of the past ten years by the President of the China Christian Council, Rev. Gao Feng, and a speech by Mr. Wang Zuo’an, Deputy Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau. There are also excerpts from two symposia: Theological Reconstruction and Theological Education, held in September at Nanjing Seminary and Theological Reconstruction and Sermons, held concurrently with the November meeting. In addition, there are articles on youth work in a Hangzhou church and a Christian reflection on the recent powdered milk scandal.

For all the help and support received as I find my way as the new editor of ANS, I am deeply grateful to Theresa Carino, Anita Sieh and all of the wonderful volunteer translators who have made this issue possible. As always, your comments and suggestions are most welcome.

Janice Wickeri
Gao Feng, President of the China Christian Council, gave this address at the meeting in Nanjing to mark the 10th anniversary of Theological Reconstruction. He began by locating Theological Reconstruction in the context of the government policy of reform and opening, which began in 1978. Gao cited Christian response to recent natural disasters, such as the major snowstorms in January and the Sichuan earthquake in May, as well as participation in many forms of social service and Christian support for the Olympics as ways Chinese Christians have shared in their nation's development and progress toward the goal of a moderately well-off and harmonious society.

In his review, Rev. Gao gave a retrospective on the background of Theological Reconstruction from the articulation of the need for new explorations in theological thinking by Bishop K.H. Ting, to the passage of the Resolution on Strengthening Theological Reconstruction at the Second Joint (expanded) Standing Committee meeting of the Sixth TSPM and Fourth CCC held in November, 1998, in Jinan (Shandong) and the results of this emphasis in theology, theological education and practical pastoral work during the ensuing decade.

Rev. Gao characterizes the goals of Theological Reconstruction as "continuing the fine tradition of Christian theological reflection founded on biblical teaching, adhering to the basic faith set out in the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, assimilating the best of Chinese culture in combination with the important historical experience of decades of adherence to the Three-Self patriotic path. From within a contextual theological approach, it is a response to the real issues facing the Chinese Church that seeks to eliminate modes of thinking that have posed obstacles to sound development in the church, and gradually explore building a system of Christian theology with Chinese characteristics. The ultimate goal is to assist Christians in establishing a pure faith, a lively spiritual life and a positive attitude to life, to promote better development of Chinese Christianity, and to enable Chinese Christianity to adapt to socialist society and make a fine witness within a socialist harmonious society."

Results achieved during a decade of Theological Reconstruction include 1) its importance has been widely recognized; 2) theological reflection in the church has been invigorated; 3) Christians' understanding of their faith has been deepened; 4) preaching in the church has been enriched; 5) Christian morality and ethics is widely honored; and 6) Christians' sense of social responsibility and consciousness of service have grown.

Rev. Gao also reflected on the experience gleaned in putting Theological Reconstruction into practice: 1) a biblical foundation is fundamental to progress in Theological Reconstruction; 2) maintaining three-self principles is a prerequisite; 3) sound CCC/TSPM organizations, nationally and locally serve as institutional safeguards in the process; and 4) the basic stuff of Theological Reconstruction is a Christian response to the realities of the times.

Future Prospects: What is Needed for Continued Progress in Theological Reconstruction
The practice of the Chinese Church proves that upholding the three-self principles and following the love-country love-church path is crucial for running the church well. Today, history has entrusted us with a new responsibility and a new task. As we commemorate a decade of Chinese Christian theological reconstruction, we must, building on the foundation of the elder generation’s hard work, carry forward the task we have inherited, and take
Theological Reconstruction

Chinese Christian theological reflection into a new phase.

We have seen gradual achievements during the last decade, but the road we must follow in our great task of Theological Reconstruction is arduous and long. Thus we have identified the following points for future action. The bases for continued progress in Theological Reconstruction are as follows:

1 Running the church well according to three-self principles

The Chinese Church initiated Theological Reconstruction on the foundation of respect for the Bible and the over two thousand years of outstanding church tradition. A theological direction has been established for Theological Reconstruction that is consistent with the development of the Chinese Church. Furthermore, running the church well on three-self principles has been made its foundation.

We say that Theological Reconstruction is the development and deepening of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, first, because the social function of both can be traced to the same origin. Fifty years of history have amply proven that the Three-Self Patriotic Movement is the successful practice of the patriotic spirit within the realm of Christianity, erecting a fine political and economic foundation for Christianity’s adaptation to socialist society. In the late 1990s, the elder generation of church leaders initiated and promoted Theological Reconstruction in order to set a stable foundation of thought and theology to further guide the adaptation of Christianity to socialist society.

Secondly, Theological Reconstruction is a response to the demands of the times; i.e., that the Chinese Church realize true self-government, self-support and self-propagation. Achieving these principles is necessary for self-development. It is also a necessary demand to the church from an already independent people, and even more from an already liberated Chinese society to a Christianity that had entered China with the backing of Western cannon. Undertaking adjustment and reform of theological views enables Chinese Christianity to both be consistent with the essence of the Bible and adapt to the development of the times; it is the positive Christian response to the realities of the present and the demand to be light and salt in its context. This will have a huge and far-reaching positive impact on the sound development of Chinese Christianity in the future.

Thirdly, the three-self patriotic movement is the precious experience and riches of Chinese Christianity. It has not only historical and political significance, but also theological and ecclesial significance. This unique experience requires constant review and assessment, refinement and improvement. At the same time its nature as church means it requires theological nourishment before it can serve as the theoretical guideline for running the church well, as well as being an important component of the spiritual treasurehouse of the universal church. This is the task of Theological Reconstruction. So we say that Theological Reconstruction maintains and develops the three-self principles, deepens and enriches the content of three-self and enables the practice of three-self to be lively and vigorous.

2 Reliance on local Christian Councils and Three-self organizations

We need to be aware of the longterm and arduous nature of Theological Reconstruction. We must not produce loose or static thinking, but constantly strengthen our own study. Like the prophets who kept watch in days of yore, we must be constantly

Today, history has entrusted us with a new responsibility and a new task. As we commemorate a decade of Chinese Christian Theological Reconstruction, we must, building on the foundation of the elder generation’s hard work, carry forward the task we have inherited, and take Chinese Christian theological reflection into a new phase.

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awake and ready to apply Theological Reconstruction in all our work. The CCC/TSPM must have an overall plan for unified planning, theory and research on the one hand and transforming results into practice on the other. ... Local Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations nationwide must mobilize pastoral workers to take an active part in Theological Reconstruction, making full use of to their theological knowledge and pastoral experience. They can identify believers’ concerns and difficulties and solidly promote Theological Reconstruction. Volunteers and Christian intellectuals should become involved and ever more people encouraged to join in Theological Reconstruction, which will enliven it. A definite plan of work and goals must be set, a theory group organized, and funds provided for activities so that Theological Reconstruction can move securely and effectively forward.

3  A base in seminaries and bible schools
Seminaries and bible schools are the base of Theological Reconstruction: their role is crucial to its promotion. Not only must Theological Reconstruction be well established in the present, even more, we must keep our eyes on the training of the next generation of theological thinkers. ... To this end, the CCC/TSPM and Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations nationwide must increase their support and concern for seminaries and bible schools and provide guidance for courses and research in church subjects offered in these institutions, as well as motivate the church and believers to support running these institutions well both with prayer and funds.

4  Prioritize the Transformation of Preaching
Theological Reconstruction has an impact on every aspect of the work of the Chinese Church, but most directly on the pulpit. Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations throughout the church must encourage pastoral workers to bring the fruits of the theological reconstruction discussions into their sermons. The CCC/TSPM must continue its publication work, including Tian Feng and the CCC/TSPM website, using forms that believers find user friendly, strengthening readiness and effectiveness. ... Most importantly more pastoral workers should be involved in Theological Reconstruction, linking its concerns to every sort of pastoral work, so that more people may share in its benefits.

5  Absorb the best of Chinese culture
Theological Reconstruction must be rooted in the fertile soil of China's outstanding culture, and must also pay attention to the reality of Chinese society. Just as a good seed, in order to grow, must fall on fertile ground to absorb fertilizer and nurture, before it can bear fruit in abundance, only by putting down its roots in the soil of China's outstanding culture can Theoretical Reconstruction be invigorated. This is the truth revealed to us by the incarnate Christ. We must rid ourselves of that generalization that says Chinese culture is an “heretical” or “alien” culture and intentionally meld Christianity with the ongoing stream of Chinese culture, so that Christianity becomes an accepted part of the culture and a religion that is welcomed by the Chinese people. We must avoid manufactured contradictions between ourselves and those who hold to different beliefs and actively pursue dialog with them, absorbing what is helpful from other experiences to enrich ourselves.

6  The practice of faith should be a key task
Only sound thinking can produce positive action. The concrete effects of Theological Reconstruction will be seen in the actions this theological thinking is able to bring about. We must see whether it can truly be an effective guide to the witness and practice of the lives of Chinese Christians; whether it is helpful in running the church well according to three-self principles; whether it is helpful in the process of mutual adaptation between Chinese Christianity and socialist society. We must translate its fruits into action. Theological Reconstruction should be a vital force for every Christian, just as our Lord Jesus acted in “gentle humility” to accommodate others and care for them. We should gladly serve as he did, with the goal of service to others, rather than being served ourselves; we should be light and salt in the workplace; we should embrace the concept that “a good Christian should be a good citizen”: everywhere living out a Christian life. Thus, Theological Reconstruction will better safeguard pure Christian faith, and the positive strength of this pure faith will give greater glory to God and benefit to people!

Translated, summarized and excerpted from Tian Feng No.345 December 2008 by Janice Wickeri
Bishop Ting’s speech was delivered on Nov. 11, 2008.

It makes me very happy to be taking part in this meeting today marking the tenth anniversary of Chinese Christian Theological Reconstruction and at the same time to have the opportunity to see many old friends. To my knowledge, in the ten years since the inception of Theological Reconstruction, the CCC/TSPM and Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations throughout the church all have all placed a great deal of importance on these efforts and every aspect of its promotion has been vigorous, distinctive and influential.

By saying influential, I mean that affirmation and expectations of the positive role we Christians are playing in the building of a harmonious society has increased throughout every sector of society. Along with the continued deepening of Theological Reconstruction, Christians have established themselves in their occupations, love and respect their jobs, serve society, and actively engage in the modernization of our nation. Through their enthusiasm for public welfare endeavors they are bringing about a happy change in Chinese Christianity. A large number of outstanding persons who love country and love church and are dedicated to society have emerged. By their practical actions they display the brilliance of Chinese Christians and elevate the image of Chinese Christianity.

The recent Third Plenum of the 17th National Party Congress indicated that we must fully implement the spirit of this Congress, achieve a thoroughly scientific view of development, and strive for a new victory in the comprehensive building of a moderately well-off society, a new situation in a socialism with Chinese characteristics. In this new situation, we must further promote Theological Reconstruction, run the church well according to three-self principles, strive to achieve China’s harmonious society, and play a role in promoting the economic development of that society. To this end,

We must preach the revelation and message given us by God in this age and enliven our theological thinking, so that a pure gospel and sound theological thinking will lead Christians to live out a proactive and uplifting attitude to human life and be light and salt, caring for those alone or in need. Christians should be a blessing to others, spreading Christ’s love and playing a positive role in the harmonious society.

I would like to present three hopes and views on developing Theological Reconstruction well for your consideration.
First, I hope the CCC/TSPM and its counterparts throughout the church will maintain the development of Theological Reconstruction as prima inter pares in every aspect of their work. I hope especially that responsible colleagues place a high degree of emphasis on it. In improving self-management, while striving to build the CCC/TSPM into a church body that is institutionally strong, united, cooperative, and managed in an orderly fashion, the main duty of Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations throughout the church is to serve the church, and build up the church. Therefore, Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations must implement Theological Reconstruction where they are and give practical guidance for the sound development of the Chinese Church.

Second, I hope that seminaries and bible schools will bring all their fine qualities to bear in their role as bases for Theological Reconstruction. Our seminaries and bible schools bear the heavy responsibility of equipping and building up the younger generation of evangelists, therefore they must fully utilize their best qualities in achieving a higher standard of research in theological theories, abundant resources, and a concentration of personnel, as well as being connected to the realities of the church. In teaching and research, they should redouble their efforts in promoting Theological Reconstruction, giving a new impetus to Theological Reconstruction, training new talent and mobilizing new potential. To this end, I hope Christian Councils and Three-Self Organizations throughout the church will make this their concern, supporting the construction of seminaries and bible schools and devising ways to help these institutions solve their difficulties, strengthen their management and raise the level of teaching and research.

Third, I hope we can translate the fruits of Theological Reconstruction for the messages preached in our churches in a timely manner. We must preach the revelation and message given us by God in this age and enliven our theological thinking, so that a pure gospel and sound theological thinking will lead Christians to live out a proactive and uplifting attitude to human life and be light and salt, caring for those alone or in need. Christians should be a blessing to others, spreading Christ’s love and playing a positive role in the harmonious society. Christians are found throughout the countryside and cities, and in every profession. By their every word and action, they represent not only themselves as individual Christians, but the image and prestige of Christianity in the eyes of others. Therefore, as we promote Theological Reconstruction, we must make its results a reality in a timely manner, so that more people will share in its results. These will manifest Christians’ noble qualities and maintain Christianity’s good image. Our good image consists in taking a positive attitude and engaging in every project of building up society, by treating persons and situations with tolerance, by seeing gain and loss as normal, serving society with grateful hearts and being a blessing to humankind.

Translated from Tian Feng No.345 December 2008 by Janice Wickeri

If you are interested in Chinese theology, read the Chinese Theological Review (CTR). CTR provides an excellent follow-up of theological discussion in China. Find details on the Amity News Service website: www.amitynewsservice.org
New Light for the Church in China

Wang Zuo’an is Deputy Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council, the highest-ranking of several national and provincial level officials in religious affairs work to speak at the meeting.

Distinguished Guests and Friends:

Today, as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches of China and the China Christian Council hold this meeting in Nanjing to commemorate the Tenth Anniversary of Theological Reconstruction, I bring good wishes from the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council and salute all who support and participate in Theological Reconstruction.

Our beloved Bishop Ting will be with us today. Bishop Ting has long devoted himself to advancing theological thinking that suits Chinese society and accords with the social realities of the Chinese Church. His outstanding contributions have not only garnered the admiration of fellow church workers here at home, but have won high respect from church people abroad. Ten years ago, with others in the senior generation of church leaders, he initiated Theological Reconstruction, bringing the Church in China to a new realm. Through the efforts of the CCC/TSPM, their local counterparts throughout the church and seminaries and bible schools over these past ten years, Theological Reconstruction has made excellent progress, and has become a new force in running the church well according to three-self principles. The church has, as a result, undergone a most heartening change.

In commemorating the 10th anniversary of Theological Reconstruction, we must reaffirm achievements, sum up experience and research ideas and other measures that would act to break through factors that restrain us, and move Theological Reconstruction to a new phase in order to seek the theological wisdom to run the church well according to three-self principles in our context and further promote mutual adaptation between Christianity and socialist society. I would like to take this opportunity to offer three suggestions:

1. Theological Reconstruction must be closely related to the realities of the Chinese church

Bishop Ting has said, “Theology is the thinking of the Church.” There is much food for thought in this phrase which indicates not only the importance of theology to the Church, but also the close connection between theology and the Church. Providing ideas and theories to guide the resolution of issues the Church encounters as it matures is dependent on not only the efforts of theologians, but also upon the participation of the church organizations and of seminary and bible school staff and students as well as pastoral workers. The Chinese Church has taken the Three-Self Patriotic path and this can be termed a great awakening, a great reformation in Chinese Christian history. Yet, to achieve genuine selfhood, the Chinese Church must also nurture and construct a theology appropriate to itself. It also needs a growth which is both “in stature” and “in wisdom,” to achieve development which is holistic, harmonious and sound, attaining both an inner wisdom and an outer appeal. In this sense, theological reconstruction is a further internalization and deepening of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Therefore, theological reconstruction is not some abstract study carried on in an ivory tower, but an endeavor which must be imbued with the living practice of the Church. It is not rebuilding a theological system to find a point of departure, but a resolution of perspectives on real issues to find a point of entry.
2. Theological Reconstruction must be in touch with social progress

The Chinese economy and society today are undergoing changes of vast and historic proportions: sustaining reform and opening, advancing scientific progress, and promoting the harmonious society have become the major trends of our era. Chinese Christianity cannot remain aloof from such changes; in fact it has become part of these changes. Christians must not only be in relationship with God, but must also follow God’s instruction to be in relationship with their country, their society and other people. In recent years, theological reconstruction has enriched the sermons preached from Chinese pulpits, and growing numbers of Christians have been inspired by this, gradually moving beyond a narrow faith model concerned only with personal salvation toward one which puts into practice Jesus’ teaching to “love others as oneself,” and to have concern for other people and for society. In the final analysis, the task of Theological Reconstruction is to guide the Church and believing individuals in the realities of the society where they are to take up responsibility, practice their faith, be salt and light, and spread truth, goodness, beauty, faith, hope, and love. To this end, there must be theological reflection on the role of the church in the context of Chinese society today, as well as on the relationship among church, state and society, and on this basis a theological interpretation of the gospel of Jesus Christ rich in the spirit of the age which will guide Chinese Christianity become part of the mainstream of social progress and development. At present, Theological Reconstruction must respond to the contemporary need to build a harmonious socialist society. Accurate exposition of concepts such as “reconciliation,” “harmony,” and “peace,” as used in the original biblical texts and church tradition; engagement in building a harmonious culture; active promotion of the harmonious society: these are important manifestations of the contemporary Christian contribution in promoting economic and social development.

3. Theological Reconstruction Must Look Toward the Sinicization of Christianity

Christianity came out of Jerusalem, transcending its ethnic and national boundaries to propagate throughout the world, and adapting to and putting down roots in the particular environment of each place, in the process of becoming a world religion. Just as contextualization is an important characteristic of the development of Christianity, all theological thinking is contextualized thinking that subsequently has an important impact on the universal church. China has a long and uniquely refined cultural tradition, and we are treading the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, through reform and opening accelerating socialist modernization, diligently striving to bring about a great Chinese renaissance. If Chinese Christianity is to see sound development and assume an active role as part of such a cultural tradition, social environment and contemporary background, then Theological Reconstruction is the essential issue. Through its own course toward maturity in new China, especially through its practice of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the Chinese Church has shaped a theology in keeping with its own development, a theological system with Chinese characteristics making; a unique in the Chinese social and cultural context to carrying forward the Sinicization of Chinese Christianity.

Distinguished guests and friends, Bishop Ting has described his hopes for Theological Reconstruction: “What lies before us, our long-range vision, is a Chinese Church with a rich theology that does not go against reason, one that is more adapted to the socialist society of China, one that is capable of helping its believers to achieve a faith and witness that is more harmonious and rational.” Basic Christian faith has not changed in thousands of years, but contemporary theological inquiry continues to adapt to and enrich the times. Persevering in faith and diligence, Chinese Christianity will certainly achieve its longe-range vision of Theological Reconstruction. By means of Theological Reconstruction, guiding believers in loving the country and loving the church and following healthy spiritual lives, running the church well according to three-self principles, adapting Christianity to socialist society: all this benefits the church as well as society. It is pleasing to all sectors of society the Party and government providing for Christian accommodation of socialism to benefit the church and society for the good of all. Please be assured that both the Party and government will continue, as always, in enthusiastic encouragement and firm support for your endeavors.

Translated from Tian Feng No.345 December 2008
by Robert Soong

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Bringing the Fruits of Theological Reconstruction to Preaching

Gleanings from a “Symposium on Sermons and Theological Reconstruction”

By Fang Ying

In 2008, the CCC/TSPM held a series of activities to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Theological Reconstruction, including a symposium on “Sermons and Theological Reconstruction” on November 12-13. Discussion was centered on the four areas of “Translating the Fruits of Theological Reconstruction,” “Theological Reconstruction and Harmonious Society,” “Theological Reconstruction and Social Service” and “Theological Reconstruction and Traditional Culture.” Excerpts from some of the talks are presented below.

Translating the fruits of Theological Reconstruction

A contextual theology of preaching – a relational model derived from the interaction between text, preacher and congregation (Geng Weizhong, East China Theological Seminary): The theology of preaching posits that sermons should not follow a model of one-way communication from preacher to text to congregation, but should rather be an interaction between text, preacher and congregation. There are two kinds of interaction that preachers must consider. One is a vertical interaction, establishing a relationship of unity with God and developing one’s character through reading, understanding, following and proclaiming the Bible. The second is a horizontal interaction with the congregation, and is founded upon caring for their “here and now” and building a harmonious and friendly connection with them.

Bring the fruits of Theological Reconstruction into sermons (Huang Fengxiang, Shandong Theological Seminary): In their sermons, preachers should stress guiding believers’ thinking and helping them to understand what sort of a book the Bible is. They should study the Bible as whole and lead believers to form a proper view of life, thus glorifying God and benefitting people. As a result of being misled by certain improper teachings, some Chinese Protestants have a negative and evasive attitude toward the secular world. Theological Reconstruction must draw upon positive experiences in this area and we must apply the fruits of Theological Reconstruction in sermons, thereby rectifying misconceptions and positively participating in this world that God has created and continues to sustain.

Theological Reconstruction and harmonious society

On the Protestant ethic of harmonious interpersonal relations (Zheng Cunquan, Jiaxing church, Zhejiang): People’s lives cannot be abstracted from family relationships. Family relationships are the most
foundational of all kinds of social relationships; although their reach is limited, they lay the foundation for social harmony. The Chinese have an old saying: “When there is harmony at home, everything prospers.” From a hierarchical perspective, harmony in the family is founded on respecting the elderly and loving the young, and in parents being loving and children being filial. From an egalitarian perspective, it means respecting and loving each other, and harmony between husband and wife. The relationship between husband and wife is pivotal, and is the foundation for other relationships within the family.

Where we should direct our efforts to construct a harmonious culture (Ni Guangdao, Hangzhou Church, Zhejiang): In joining in the construction of a harmonious culture, Chinese Protestants must recognize three relationships. First, that of the socialist core value system guiding Chinese Protestantism. This relationship may be confirmed but not reversed. Second, the relationship between Chinese Protestantism and Chinese traditional culture. This is a win-win relationship of coexistence and mutual benefit, and may be developed, but not held back. Third, the relationship between Chinese Protestantism and sound theology. In building a harmonious culture these two can benefit and improve each other; this relationship may be strengthened but not weakened.

The social function of Protestantism in the Chinese context (Yuangang, Chongqing Church, Sichuan): Chinese Protestants are both participants and beneficiaries in the construction of China’s socialist modernization. They are richly endowed with resources that can be put to good use for the construction of a socialist legal system and morality. The fundamentals of Chinese civic morality are compatible with the Protestant social ethic, and are also thoroughly supported by the Bible. In regard to “loving the nation and abiding by the law,” for example, those biblical prophets who were full of devotion to their own nations are magnificent models for Protestants today in loving their homeland. The Bible also has clear teachings regarding obedience to rulers and respect for the legal system.

This is the objective of our dialogue and discussion, namely Chinese culture faced with biblical culture, confronting the revealed truth of our creator God. It is Chinese culture directly facing the heart of God’s revealed truth – Christ Jesus.

The role and challenge of Protestantism in the construction of a new countryside (Zhang Jiantong, Guang’an Church, Sichuan): Rural churches are key sites for heresies and infiltrators, and are also the weakest area of our work. If the situation is not improved, it will not only constitute a severe challenge to running the church well according to three-self principles and withstanding the infiltration of heresies and foreign forces, but will also impact the government’s program for the construction of a new countryside. Church organizations at all levels should therefore discuss and draw up ways of dealing with these issues as soon as possible.

Theological Reconstruction and traditional culture

Strengthening the dialogue between Theological Reconstruction and Chinese traditional culture (Xu Baoluo, Zhongnan Theological Seminary): When we speak of Chinese culture being in dialogue with Protestant culture, we should engage in and distinguish between four different kinds of dialogue. The first is dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures. The second is dialogue between Chinese culture and Western Protestant culture. The third is dialogue between Chinese culture and Protestant culture. The fourth is the objective of our dialogue and discussion, namely Chinese culture faced with biblical culture, confronting the revealed truth of our creator God. It is Chinese culture directly facing the heart of God’s revealed truth – Christ Jesus.
In the ten years since Theological Reconstruction was undertaken in the Church in China, institutions of theological education have been the foundation upon which development has taken place. From 23rd to 25th September 2008, representatives from theological institutions met at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary to discuss topics including “Theological Education and Curriculum,” “Theological Education and the Church in China,” “Theological Education and Chinese Culture,” and “Theological Education and Social Responsibility,” outlining a wonderful blueprint for the future of theological education and systematic theological thinking. Excerpts from the discussions are presented below.

Theological Education and Curriculum

Sacred music education and curriculum (Weng Cuiqin, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary): Theological education in sacred music sets the direction for the development of sacred music in the Church by training church musicians. However, the more significant task of such curriculum would be to provide theoretical grounds for the development of sacred music, and to train persons of talent who can translate those theories for use by practising musicians.

Improving curriculum to raise the quality of theological education (Huang Tianhua, Guangdong Union Theological Seminary): We are continually seeking better theological concepts in our task of theological education, but spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical and social growth are commonly recognized as concepts underlying Chinese theological education. Implementing and making these concepts a reality will be helpful in realizing our goal of educating the whole person.

Breaking new paths: A semiotic view of Theological Reconstruction and sermons (Zhao Xin, Shanghai Church): As preachers, clergy must above all be clear on the essence of the gospel. They must excise the meanings piled upon it by the Western cultural context, and express and convey the gospel to Protestants in such a way that it is integrated with Chinese culture. That is to say, we should be transmitting a declaration of faith that is rooted in the Chinese context rather than a style of Protestantism that is “borrowed” from the West. We should use signs that are accepted and recognized by believers in order to express the ideas of early Protestantism. This process is a concrete practicing and translation of Theological Reconstruction into sermons.

Translated and summarized from Tian Feng No.345 December 2008 by Emily Clare Dunn
of “patriotic Christian education” and “Theological Reconstruction” curriculum are responses by the Church in China to influences such as the market economy and globalization, pragmatism and the mentality of instant gratification. A correct view of the Bible and theology must be incorporated into curriculum and teaching in theological institutions, so that the Christian faith may actively respond to the challenges around it and play the special Christian role in the building of the economy and a harmonious society.

Theological education and curriculum (Tan Yuzhen, Hunan Bible School):
In theory, the aim of theological education is to supply trained workers for the Church. But there is also the more imperative task of providing a theoretical basis for the development of the Church, and moreover, to train those who will make these theories a reality. Theological education can only be effectively done in its own context. Besides striving to construct a traditional theological education focussed on the Bible, doctrine, and the church, we must also stress the importance of understanding the context in which we are located, and of being able to break through the conceptual constraints formed in other contexts.

Theological education and curriculum (Li Li, Zhongnan Theological Seminary): We must strengthen and develop teaching staff. Theological institutions do not share standardized texts, nor is there any concerted effort at exchange or cooperation in teaching, which hinders the development of theological education.

Theological Education and the Church in China

Staying abreast of the times in seminary training (Lin Manhong, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary): If the purpose of theological education is to train thinkers, students must be encouraged to be diligent in thinking and to become good at thinking, good at resolving issues and improving their knowledge. Through in-depth discussion of different views, students enliven and further liberate their thinking, so that with correct guidance, they may contribute towards an up-to-date, practical and realistic system of theological thinking.

Seeing the deepening of Theological Reconstruction as an opportunity to strengthen theological education in the Church in China (Hu Yingqiang, East China Theological Seminary): Fully utilizing available human resources at theological institutions and strengthening research in Theological Reconstruction would mean building a model of ethics with Chinese characteristics and a model of service for the Chinese Christian Church. Basic Christian faith and its ethical framework should be interpreted on a sound biblical basis in combination with China’s essence and culture, so that the gospel may be more effectively spread, Christians helped to lead spiritually sound and uplifting lives, the Church guided to develop according to the three-self principles, and mutual adaptation between the Christian faith and socialist society may be promoted. Theological study should not be merely study for study’s sake, it should come from within the praxis of the Church to be applied in the realities of its ministry.
Development of theological education from the perspective of the function of the Church (Fu Lili, Shaanxi Bible School): Theological education in China has yet to catch up with the popularity which modern media and internet have reached. Christians can access the internet to obtain information on theology material, homilies, hymns and theology courses. This is a challenge to the Church in developing its own theology. Because its own voice is weak in this area, the church needs new models and methods for developing theological education capable of addressing the needs of the vast numbers of Christians in China...

continuing education for the present teaching staff is tremendously important. Internet courses are a feasible model for theological education: students can use such courses for independent study, submit papers, improve their study skills, and participate in teaching.

Theological Education and Chinese Culture

Why does Christian theology need Chinese culture? (Tian Tongxin, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary): The reason Christian theology needs Chinese culture goes beyond the fact that there are theologians theologizing in the Chinese context. Nor is it due to the strength of Chinese culture which makes Sinicization or contextualization inescapable for cultural forces entering China (as Buddhism), nor is it even that Chinese culture enjoys international importance. The main reason is that only Chinese culture, having accepted faith in Jesus and undergone profound self-renewal, can correct the abnormalities of Western cultures. Only Christian theology, fused and imprinted with the best of Chinese culture and steeped in Confucianism has the possibility to aid in altering humankind's tendency toward self-destruction...

Only Christian theology, fused and imprinted with the best of Chinese culture and steeped in Confucianism has the possibility to aid in altering humankind’s tendency toward self-destruction... while working toward the indigenization of Christianity in Chinese culture, while affirming traditional culture, we must be analytical as well as critical. Christianity can, indeed must, integrate with Chinese culture--this is certain. At the same time we must assiduously avoid producing some kind of poisonous “Western Confucianism.”

Theological Education and Social Responsibility

Viewing the social responsibility of theological education in terms of Christ, the Son of Man (Chen Xiaolang, Zhejiang Theological Seminary): The foremost social responsibility for all theological institutions should be the nurturing of patriotic and law abiding seminarians. In this sense, they should be models for Christians: exemplary in their behavior, leading Christians to respect the law of their own accord. Theological educators should teach their students to be good people, to work hard, to save energy, and contribute towards the economic growth of our country.

The ethical dimension of theological education and social responsibility (Hong Shuyong, Jiangxi Bible School): Theological institutions should strengthen teaching on ethical responsibilities, explore democratic education models and aid in the development of professional ethics.

Excerpted and translated from Tian Feng No.345 December 2008 by Cinde Lee
Youth Ministry in Hangzhou

An Interview with Rev. Zhang Guoyong, Youth Pastor at Chongyi Church, Hangzhou

From the time regular church worship was restored in China, large numbers of new churches have continuously emerged in our great land, vividly displaying God’s special leading of the Chinese church. With new churches have come many “new people,” including a steady stream of young people, a large number of whom have become church members. It is necessary, then, for the church to pay careful attention to the pastoral care of young believers, as this relates directly to the development of tomorrow’s church. It is said that Hangzhou’s Chongyi Church has, since its founding, focused on developing its youth ministry, and has had a favorable impact on the surrounding area. With some curiosity and many questions, Wang Yuebi visited an evening youth fellowship at Chongyi Church on 5 August 2008, and interviewed Rev. Zhang Guoyong, pastor for youth work there.

Question: In just a few short years, the youth fellowship at Chongyi Church has grown to over a thousand people. To what do you attribute such rapid development?

Rev. Zhang: I think that there are three key reasons: The first is an emphasis on prayer. Before each gathering, there is a special prayer vigil for the group. We also ask that those who serve arrive early, so that before the service, they can first pray in small groups. After a time of quiet prayer, they can serve with calm hearts.

The second reason is an emphasis on preaching. We think that God’s people will be attracted to spiritual food wherever it is, and thus, in our preaching, we insist on spiritual food which contains pure, balanced, rich truth. We direct our work to the needs of young people - every year the youth fellowship has a theme, with topics for each quarter. What you heard tonight focused on the topic for the third quarter - “harmonious interpersonal relationships.” In our preaching we strive to lead them by truth, to help them be better able to face the difficulties and confusion inherent in interpersonal relationships within family, society and work.

The third area is follow-up and care. We know that the church is the family of the eternal God, so...
we want believers to feel the warmth of family in the church, which not only involves teaching the truth, but even more importantly, loving concern, so that after hearing God's Word, believers can live it out. We emphasize that those who have already received grace should care for newcomers, accompanying them on this stage of the journey of faith, so that through this kind of interaction, fellowship and care, new believers can enter into faith quite smoothly and experience God.

**Question:** What is the make-up of those who attend the youth fellowship in terms of age, education and occupation?

**Rev. Zhang:** In the Chongyi Church youth fellowship, overall, most people are young to middle aged, with youth fellowship participants under 40-years-old. Because Chongyi Church is fairly centrally located, you could say that participants come from every occupation, but the majority are university students.

**Question:** Many university students understand Christianity in terms of culture, so how do you get them to move from an interest in culture to conversion to faith?

**Rev. Zhang:** It is certainly not strange that many young people understand Christianity as culture; we are grateful that they can come to church. Our leading is in four areas.

First, we guide them in the truth, and so we have a course of eight lessons in basic faith for new believers, to bring them to know the Lord and to understand that what Christianity preaches is the Way of Life.

Second, we change them by example through our fellowship. ...through sincere and pious prayer, they come to feel that this is a different sort of heaven and earth; that God is here, love is here and life is here.

Third, we lead them in communion with God, and ...after every teaching session, we have discussion time with opportunity for each to share their own experiences of faith, so that each one thirsting to experience grace may enter into faith.

Fourth, we influence them by life example. Every true Christian is one whose life has been changed - when Lazarus came back to life out of death, many believed simply because they were there to see it. Our method is also simple – we use the example of Christians who have been called by God to new life to influence and move others.

**Question:** There are many young Christians in your church now, so what kind of model do you use to provide effective pastoral care for them?

**Rev. Zhang:** Our pastoral care model for youth ministry is a combination of large group meetings and small group care. ... At the same time, we study in different ways according to different needs, for example we have classes for seekers who have decided for Christ during evangelistic meetings; those who have completed the seekers’ classes continue with Bible and religious knowledge classes; after that new care groups are established or people are placed into different small groups, enabling them to receive care as needed in the small groups. Thus their journey of faith proceeds quite steadily.

**Question:** Because of the urbanization of China, migration within Chinese society has greatly increased, and this has had an impact on many churches. How do you respond to the challenges brought by such migration?
Rev. Zhang: In this area, small care groups play an important role, making up the shortfall in pastoral care. By attending small care groups each week, lives are built up, and although these brothers and sisters may leave Hangzhou, they don’t leave the church. Regular contact is also maintained with those who leave Hangzhou, such as with some university graduates who go to other cities to work and yet maintain contact with those in their small groups and pray for one another.

The problem of migration does present certain difficulties for pastoral care in a church, but it also provides the church with opportunities, reminding us to grasp every chance possible to share the gospel. Every two months we have an evangelistic meeting, where we hope that even more people can share with us in the great benefits of the gospel. In this way, although we face an age where there is great movement of people, the number of people in the fellowship continues to increase, which is because of God’s grace, and also because of our hard work. At the same time we encourage believers “to take Christ home”, which involves two aspects: first to take Christ to the family – to live Christ in family life, making the family even more harmonious and thus to lead the whole family to God; and second to take Christ to one’s hometown – if one leaves Hangzhou to return to their village or to another place, one takes the gospel. People in our church’s youth fellowship gospel meetings make a commitment, work through seeker classes, and then return to their hometowns because of their work, and lead people in their hometowns to the Lord by being a testimony of the grace which glorifies God and benefits people.

Question: Are the youth fellowship and the Sunday service ever in conflict? What is the relationship between them?

Rev. Zhang: Our Sunday service and the youth fellowship do not conflict with each other, but rather supplement one another. Each meeting has its own distinctive features; the Sunday service uses a comparatively traditional style of worship while the youth fellowship is livelier ... young brothers and sisters can get even more training because of the youth fellowship, raising up more people to serve in Sunday worship. This is how the church experiences sound growth.

Question: Where does youth ministry fit in the development of the church?

Rev. Zhang: Overall, youth ministry is at the core of the development of the whole church, because our church is mostly made up of middle aged and young people, with over half of the believers under forty years of age. Furthermore our aim is this: Everyone is a believer and everyone is a disciple. Yesterday, you were a guest. Today, you have accepted Jesus and now you are one of the family. The day after tomorrow you will be a servant.

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by Suzanne Rowe

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Thank You!
“Melamine!” At the mere mention of this word many people are scared to death. Not so long ago few people had even heard of this chemical; recently, however, it has become a frequent topic of serious conversation. Melamine, as it turns out, is a chemical substance that some unscrupulous people added to infant milk powder, including products with national brand names such as the Sanlun Milk Powder Company, allowing their companies to make a greater profit at the expense of nutrition. But as a result, several thousand infants developed kidney stones, and consequently much suffering was caused for many families.

According to media reports, in one province an infant under the age of two who was fed Sanlun Milk Powder due to a lack of mother’s milk and died from kidney stones. Hearing these news reports and reading news stories about these infants is enough to break your heart. What wrong did these infants do to deserve this? Nothing, yet they suffered this calamity. Or what did their parents do to suffer this wrong? They only bought a name-brand product that had passed a national inspection, and yet they suffered this shocking misfortune. The companies who added this toxic chemical to infant formula are completely heartless and immoral. The companies who harmed these children—the blossoms of the country, the very future of the country—should be put out of business.

Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters” (Col. 3:22-23). This verse is not referring to the imposition of external regulations, but to something deep inside the life and consciousness of every Christian, a reality written on the very heart of every Christian.

The government has explained the legal action it pursued in response: those who deserved to be fired have been fired; those who deserved to be punished have been punished; moreover, the government has also provided free medical treatment for the children needing medical care. This is important, but in reality the incident has not yet been resolved.

Our country is already on the path toward the rule of law and stresses the strict enforcement of the laws. Every citizen should respect the laws of the land, and at the same time use the law to protect their own rights. Every family harmed by the milk powder scandal should sue the companies involved and rely on the law for compensation. Human life is priceless, but these businesses have willfully trampled on the dignity of life. Strict application and enforcement of the laws will serve as a warning to these companies. As the ancients said, “The law should be administered severely,” by which they meant that only by treating criminal behavior with severe punishment can the standard for proper behavior be established.

In addition to administering the law, we should hold high the importance of self-discipline, what we call in Chinese exercising “self-restraint,” meaning that people have a sense of self-discipline towards various rules and regulations. It includes an awareness and ability to do the right thing even when there is no
external supervision. Through the ages our ancestors understood “self-discipline,” “self-examination,” “self-cultivation,” etc. as being the foundation for the cultivation of moral behavior. The eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant famously said, “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily reflection is occupied with them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me. Neither of them need I seek and merely suspect as if shrouded in obscurity or rapture beyond my own horizon; I see them before me and connect them immediately with my existence ... But the present need is for emphasizing and cultivating the moral law.”

Self-discipline is extremely important for everyone. A person with a strong sense of self-discipline is able in the midst of a busy and complicated life to stay within the “red lines” of personal and social behavior, and thereby contribute as a significant member of society. Self-discipline plays a huge role in promoting harmony in the entire country and society. Those who are self-disciplined are honest. Honest people are the backbone of a society. As the ancients said, “The law should be administered severely,” by which they meant that only by treating criminal behavior with severe punishment can the standard for proper behavior be established.

A person who exercises self-discipline shows self-respect as well as respect for other people. That is to say, a self-disciplined person cherishes his or her own life and is careful not to harm the lives of other people. In most places, the law requires that a murderer pay with his or her own life, but we frequently read media reports about people who trample on the law and treat human life as worthless. Even in our own country some government officials treat human life as if it were straw, acting as if they should be allowed to order people around as they personally choose or to solve problems with money. Is the problem that these officials do not know the law? Obviously not, since they are the ones administering the law. Nevertheless, these corrupt officials openly break the law, sometimes in egregious ways. A nation whose citizens do not have a sense of self-discipline is a nation without a future; a people without self-discipline is an ugly people. We need to strengthen a sense of self-discipline in every citizen. In fact, Christianity has some important lessons to teach about the subject. For example, the Bible says, “Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters” (Col. 3:22-23). This verse is not referring to the imposition of external regulations, but to something deep inside the life and consciousness of every Christian, a reality written on the very heart of every Christian which should gradually blossom into the practice of personal self-discipline. The Chinese Church also strongly emphasizes the important truth that an authentic “Christian should be a good citizen,” a sentiment that is already widely accepted by the vast majority of Chinese Christians.

As our country makes progress in developing its market economy, some Christians are also opening businesses, and they too must be diligent in keeping the laws and avoiding illegal activities. In fact, Christians should put their faith into action by blending their Christian beliefs with their business practices and striving to exercise self-discipline. Whatever glorifies God becomes salt and light in the world and provides a positive contribution to society all the while witnessing for Christ.

To avoid harmful incidents to life and society such as the milk powder scandal, the government and the country need to strengthen the administration of laws, and strengthen the consciousness of moral responsibility in the populace. If every individual, manufacturer, and business interest respected the life of others, what a bright future we would have.

Translated from Tian Feng No. 345 December 2008
by Kurt D. Selles
Delegation from NCCUSA Visits CCC/TSPM in Shanghai

A delegation from the NCCUSA, led by its president, H.E. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and the general secretary, Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon met leaders of the CCC/TSPM at their headquarters in Shanghai on February 26, 2009. Rev. Gao Feng, President of the China Christian Council extended a cordial welcome, while Elder Fu Xianwei, Chairman of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China, introduced the work of the CCC/TSPM as well as the current situation of the church in China. They were joined by the Rev. Bao Jiayuan, Associate General Secretary of the CCC and Elder Ou Enlin, Deputy Director of the Overseas Relations Office of the CCC.

Rev. Xu Xiaohong, general secretary of the TSPM, and Rev. Kan Baoping, his counterpart at the China Christian Council, responded to questions from the delegation concerning theological education, social service and so on. Rev. Kinnamon expressed support for the work of the Church in China and said that the NCCUSA will do all it can to help in the next Bible Exhibition that will be held in the USA.

The NCC leaders also expressed their anticipation of the Bible Ministry Exhibition of the Church in China, scheduled to open in Washington and Dallas in the near future.

“Our common prayer,” the U.S. and Chinese church leaders said, “is that God’s will be done and that God’s name be glorified! May our work and life together bear witness to the reconciling love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the One who creates, redeems, and sustains us all.”

Following the meeting, Rev. Wan Weixiang, associate general secretary of the CCC, as well as editor of Tian Feng, interviewed Rev. Kinnamon.

U.S. Secretary of State Worships at Haidian Church

During a diplomatic visit to Beijing, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attended Sunday services at Beijing’s Haidian Protestant Church on February 22. Mrs Clinton and her entourage were warmly welcomed as they worshipped alongside the over 1200 member congregation.


Mrs. Clinton said she had found the sermon very helpful, admired the modern architecture of the church and commented on the vitality of the congregation and the large number of young people.