

**Riding the Wind, Breaking Waves, Embracing Challenge
—Christian Publishing in the Mainland for the Last 45 Years**

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Spiritual Nurturing from Darkness to the Break of Dawn

The background of literature ministry traces back to the middle of the last century, from the 1950s to the 1980s. The New China had been established not so long ago then, and it experienced several decades of political movements afterwards. In that period, churches and seminaries were closed; pastors were captured, jailed and martyred; public church meetings were banned; Bibles and Christian literature were confiscated and burned. Then in the early 1980s, China entered a period of Reform and Opening-Up. Churches and seminaries were reopened. There was much to be done. The way to address spiritual hunger and the lack of resources for believers and church leaders was to put a Bible in the hands of every believer.

The persecutions under the Cultural Revolution resulted in a severe gap in church leadership. A common phenomenon in the 80s and 90s was that the church only had pastors who were above fifty or below thirty years of age. There had been fully 20 years of leadership vacuum and loss in experience. After a tough time of trial and error, the hearts of the people yearned for faith, and so the Gospel spread mightily, yet the supply of pastors was far below what was needed. When there was a loss of balance between sheep and shepherds, Christian literature and literature ministries became important and effective tools for pasturing and supported pastors quietly, while helping thousands of Christians to nourish themselves in spiritual growth.

Publishing in the Mainland under Strict Control

With the establishment of the China Christian Council in the mid 1980s, literature ministries entered a new and important phase. Firstly, the printing of Chinese Bibles was revived. With the establishment of The Amity Printing Company in Nanjing, the quality and



quantity of printed Bibles increased yearly. Bibles were sold at a low price with the support of The United Bible Societies. Today, it is no longer a problem for believers to purchase a Bible in the mainland. In the 90s, Aiji Printing House (愛基印刷廠) was established in Shanghai, moving Christian publishing into another phase – spiritual nourishment became less about “feeding the starving”, and more about “eating what is good”.

Publishing is regarded as mass media, and has always been under strict control in the mainland. All publishers in the mainland are attached to the government, government departments or other units, such as universities. There are no private publishers. Because Christian literature is under the religious field, “media” and “religion” means that these are under doubly strict control, and it is doubly hard work to receive official approval.

Christian literature in the mainland is divided into two kinds: published openly with ISBN, and those distributed privately without ISBN. The former can be sold in public bookstores and private booksellers that appeared later on. Most of the contents of these books were soft and popularized in nature. Other books with contents pertaining to theology, reference, Bible studies, hermeneutics, sermons, pasturing, devotionals, etc., are published and distributed in China Christian Council or seminaries and internally circulated.

Christian literature published in the mainland mostly came from Hong Kong in the 80s and 90s, with a minority originating from Taiwan and licensed Chinese editions of foreign books. Most of these books were translated from foreign languages (mostly English) into Chinese. Those books written by Chinese authors made up less than 20% of the Christian literature in the mainland. There have been marked improvements in this ratio after 2000.

Don't Forget Retailing!

A Christian bookstore in the mainland

Apart from publishing and distribution, there is also retailing. Earlier Christian literature was mainly sold in the Xinhua Bookstore (open publishing) and church affiliated booksellers (internal distribution). By the end



of the 90s, private Christian bookstores began to open, mostly operated by believers with a heart for literature ministry. These bookstores flourished the most during the first 10 years of the 2000s, with 500 bookstores around the nation at its height. Regrettably, because most operators lacked basic experience in operations management, and other factors such as the instability of the volume of new books, most of these bookstores had a lifespan of just 3 to 5 years. Nowadays, the number of bookstores remains at around 200. These workers of literature ministry operate and struggle on the margins of official policy for the sake of that historic calling from the Lord!

At the same time, due to intense competition, and operational demands for profits in large public bookstores, only those Christian literatures with good marketability are chosen to be sold in stores. Those very few quality books which obtain an ISBN are taken off the shelves

quickly due to poor sales. Moreover, mostly volunteers oversee the publishing and distribution of books, and those books are distributed by CCC/TSPM. These volunteers pay little attention to marketing and advertising, and the number of quality books distributed is not high either. Under the strict control of official distribution channels, those publishers still work deeply, striving for every opportunity for the Lord's sake.

Working Hard and Perseveringly for the Last 45 Years

It has been 45 years since CCL's establishment in 1971. We have published over 1,500 Christian literatures, mostly in traditional Chinese. In the 90s, we gradually started to publish



Publishing the spiritual wisdoms and teaching notes of church leaders

more in simplified Chinese. Today we have published over 500 books in simplified Chinese. Earlier CCL's books were mainly published in Hong Kong. After the churches in the mainland reopened in the 1980s, CCL rallied the support of donors to respond to the needs for spiritual nourishment, as well as the needs for pastoral training and learning of mainland pastors by giving out Bible reference books and books on hermeneutics, devotion, pasturing and theology, etc. Today, we have given out over 20 million of such books. Praise our Heavenly Father, the books have been widely accepted as spiritually pure and applicable to the lives of church leaders and believers in the mainland. The reputation of the books is good.

CCL officially began its literature ministry in the mainland in 1995, and started the field of open publishing for Christian literature. Since then we have published 78 books with over 1.8 million copies distributed. We are grateful to our Heavenly Father for opening the way for us to serve the churches and believers in the mainland through publishing. The first book published in the mainland was *The Bible-CGST Study Edition* edited by China Graduate School of Theology, published by CCL. The referral to the printer in the mainland by Dr. Han Wenzao, former President of the China Christian Council, and the donation from The United Bible Societies of all the paper for the printing, allowed this edition to be sold at a low price of RMB30. It created a new record by being

printed 3 times in that year, selling 220,000 copies. This Bible, along with *The Chinese Study Bible*, edited by Prof. Timothy Yu and published soon after by The Rock House Publishers, became widely used reference books for mainland Christians.

In August 2007, CCL held a ceremony at Beijing International Book Fair for the publication of its millionth book in the mainland. The officiating guests included Ms. Dai Chenjing (Editor-in-chief of the Religion and Culture Press, the State Administration for Religious Affairs), Rev. Yu Xinli (Chairman of Beijing CCC/TSPM), representatives of The United Bible Societies, board members of Hong Kong Publishing Federation, the Chairman of the Association of Christian Publishers in Hong Kong, Rev. Dr. Wilson Chow (President of the China Graduate School of Theology), Rev. Teddy Cheng (Vice-chairman of the Board of CCL), along with over a hundred guests from Christian publishers around the world, witnessed this occasion of thankfulness.

CCL supports mainland seminary graduates through book-giving

On the 40th Anniversary of CCL, for the sake of the next generation of readers and handing on the wisdom of the Christian church, we announced that we will start publishing e-books.



Although we had no experience and there was a lack of specialists and funding, we had our Heavenly Father. Therefore, we began digital publishing with loans from the bank. The first fruits of our efforts came in 2015: the online spiritual reading platform “eReading”, and over 110 e-books published. These included two large Bible reference books: *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* and *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. We have been giving these e-books to seminary graduates in the mainland since 2015, becoming their pocket mute teachers, and good help in pasturing.

Moreover, we began a new series: Contemporary Chinese Church Leaders Series. Through publishing the precious spiritual wisdoms and teaching notes of church leaders who served after the New China was established, especially after the reopening of churches in the 1980s, we hope to “save” and pass on the spiritual heritage to the next generation of pastors,

allowing the sharing to become a model for them. The uniqueness and localization of this spiritual heritage cannot be found in overseas publications. *Teaching Highlights in Dogmatic Theology and Hermeneutics* by Rev. Su Deci is a shining example of success which fills us with thankfulness.

Enthusiasm under Difficulties

Literature ministry is lonely and silent work. It is also full of challenges and difficulties. Whether there is strict control under communism in China or if there is financial loss caused by members of the body (workers of literature ministry or sellers), due to a lack of professional training or operational experience, or whether there is rapid change of media, such as e-books, and the gradual decrease in readership, all of these factors may attack the morale of workers in the literature ministry.



But I believe that our Heavenly Father uses literature ministry, I also strongly believe that literature ministry can make a deep impact on pasturing believers' lives. Therefore, we dare not relax in our efforts, rather we move forward, holding to the belief that, "The longer the road, the more difficult it is, the greater the hope, the deeper the grace." May our Heavenly Father show

kindness to mainland churches, and allow those spiritual leaders and believers to strengthen the foundations of their faith through Christian literature, so that they can be fully committed to be powerful leaders of the times.

Mute Teacher, Good Helper

@Matthew Fung

Director (Publishing)

Associate Publisher (CCL Publishing House)



How does CCL support mainland seminary graduates in taking on church ministry by means of “mute teachers” (book-giving)? I would like to share some moments with you as well as the goals of the 2017 book-giving plan which can be summarized in the concept of “3-alls”: “all-round”, “all-out”, and “counting on you all”.

All-round: Student Caring

“I normally teach on the five weekdays, preaching and serving on the weekends... I try my best to travel afar to visit graduates in small towns and mountain regions during summer and winter breaks. I would need to drive across muddy paths sometimes, and occasionally taking several brothers and sisters to visit the graduates, in order to understand how their ministry is going and the challenges they meet, and to cheer them up”, said a vice principal who has been teaching for over 20 years in a remotely located Bible school. His work all year round is focused on nurturing students. He is one of the many teachers taking care of the all-round needs of students. In recent years, we have visited many seminaries and Bible schools, and have noted that the teachers are preoccupied with their students’ needs, in respect of anything from enrolment, accommodation, teaching, books, counseling, to mentoring after graduation, etc. These teachers are students’ lifelong companions.

At the end of 2016, we received letters from the teachers of several districts, requesting additional deliveries of pastoral packs for graduates. On top of the hectic schedules of 2-year and 3-year training programs in their schools and despite the shortage of resources, the teachers manage to provide a half to one year short-term top up courses for front-line pastors / pastoral staff. As the classes would soon end, the teachers requested extra books

and discipleship training packs to be given out in time. Such materials are much needed in the front-line ministry. How can we not be moved by the all-round concern of these teachers for their students?

All-out: Resources Preparation

Thanks to God, CCL has been serving seminary graduates for five years since 2012. To equip them for front-line pasturing, we have produced the pastoral packs, containing hermeneutic, discipleship training, team building and leadership training references. Over 10,000 packs so far were dispatched to 35

Graduates receiving donated books



main seminaries and Bible schools in the mainland. For example, after receiving four books from “Be Series”, the graduates were really excited. They usually had read the series in the school or before entering the school, but had little chance of owning a copy themselves. (The whole Old Testament commentaries of the series are not yet published in China.)

Complementing the all-round care of the teachers, we have focused on the supply of pastoral packs to graduates. The book-giving plan covering some regional Bible training centers started last year, and it is planned to extend the plan to ten more centers in 2017. On top of the ten printed books in the pastoral packs (e.g. hermeneutic, discipleship training, Bible studies and leadership), we will continue to provide four e-books / Bible study tools due to positive feedback received in last two years. We are also exploring the arrangement of distributing 1,000 sets of e-books to year one students as tutorial aids.

Praise our Lord for sending these teachers to serve with unreserved love and all-round care! Please pray for the teachers’ health, work and life, and God’s love for them. Also please support the seminary graduates with prayers and offerings, so that they may be fostered under the Lord’s grace, be used to shepherd new generations of disciples, and be all-round pastors of the church.

Counting on You All: Supporting Book-giving Plan

Please Support 2017 “Mainland Seminary Graduates Book-giving Plan”

In the grace of our Lord, we strive to serve 45 mainland seminaries, provincial Bible schools and training centers, giving out 4,500 pastoral packs to ready-to-serve graduates in 2017. Please kindly support the funding of over US\$260,000 (each pastoral pack costs US\$58).

Raising of funds by February 2017 of at least US\$90,000 is necessary, so as to meet the provision for one-third of the beneficiaries prior to their imminent graduation.

We wish that our Lord has moved you to walk along with the graduates, support the book-giving plan, and bless their ministry in China! If you are touched to make an offering, please contact us for details, thank you.

Prayers

1. Challenges Facing the Publishing Industry

The mainland publishing industry is faced with challenges from religious policies, reading medium and a decline in reading population, etc. These factors are also affecting the publication, distribution and sales of Christian literature. May the Lord give wisdom to Christian publishers so they can continue to publish quality books, in order to support the learning needs of mainland church leaders and believers. The proposed tightened control over online information in the recently announced *Religious Affairs Regulations Draft Revisions (Deliberation Draft)* is another concern. May the Lord protect the development of online reading platforms and publishing of e-books to support young leaders and believers.



2. Soft Power



11 December 2016 marked the 15th anniversary of China's entry into the World Trade Organization. Since then, Western countries have injected new drives for the economic and social development in the mainland. It also made an impact on the development of mainland churches and cultivating leaders. Now it is China's turn to

influence the world's economy and social development. Western countries can no longer influence China and yet Hong Kong is in a unique position to assert influence through soft power. May the Lord make use of Hong Kong to broaden the horizons of mainland students. May He help Hong Kong churches continue to support mainland churches in cultivating

leaders in the face of tightened religious control.

3. Smog Attack

On 15 December 2106, Beijing authorities issued the first red alert for severe levels of air pollution and activated precautionary measures. For five times since last October, Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei and nearby regions have seen large areas being covered by smog. China has paid a heavy price - rapid deterioration in environmental pollution - for high speed economic growth over the past few decades. Its land and sources of water have also been contaminated, posing a serious risk to the health of people. May the Lord show mercy, protect the health of the elderly, children and those with cardiovascular, respiratory and other chronic diseases.



4. Remembering Lessons from History



In December 1937, Japanese troops invaded China, resulting in the horrible deaths of 300,000 civilians and soldiers in the Nanjing Massacre. 79 years after the incident, only 108 survivors of the massacre remain alive. The young generations in China, Japan and Hong Kong today have little feelings about the past atrocities.

Many people regard history as profitless as compared with finance. May the Lord show His mercy upon young people and let them remember lessons from history instead of being focused on economic gains. May the Lord help them understand their own identity and their responsibilities to the country and the world.

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