

LATEST NEWS # 342, February 21, 2006

The following news concerns China.

Dr Wenzao Han: 'a most gracious, humble giant of the Christian faith'



CHINA — Dr Wenzao Han, who died last week, has been described by the Rev Miller Milloy, General Secretary of United Bible Societies (UBS), as “a most gracious, humble giant of the Christian faith.”

The tribute, in a letter sent by Mr Milloy to Dr Han’s widow, is one of many paid to him by Christians who have been involved in working in China during the past 20 years. They include several written by past and present members of UBS staff.

Dr Han died on February 3, aged 83. President of the China Christian Council from 1996 to 2002, he also served with the Amity Foundation from 1985 until 2003 as General Secretary and Executive Vice President. Since 2002, he had been Chair of the Advisory Committee of Protestant Churches in China.

In his letter to Mrs Han, Mr Milloy described meeting Dr Han for the first time in hospital in Nanjing last October. In the course of that meeting, he says, he came to realise why all those in UBS who have had any association with China over the years held Dr Han in such high esteem.

“I met a most gracious, humble giant of the Christian faith,” he said. “Although very ill, and in considerable discomfort, he immediately set about ministering to me and those joining me in the visit. He swept aside any platitudes of sadness at his condition, assuring us of his absolute faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His promise to be with us always. For Dr Han, death held no fear. He was certain of the resurrection to eternal life because of his certainty in Jesus his Lord.”

“He listened with interest and patience,” Mr Milloy continued, “responding warmly to my questions and taking time to explain to me about the Church in China.” And when the General Secretary returned to Nanjing last month to celebrate the production of the 40 millionth Bible by the Amity Printing Company, he received a letter from Dr Han apologising for not being able to be present in person, “assuring me that, if the Lord willed it, he would join me for the celebration of the 50 millionth Bible!”

In his tribute, Dr Eugene Habecker, who until last year was President of the American Bible Society, said Dr Han was “a giant” and “a dear friend of the American Bible Society”.

Somporn Sirikolkarn, UBS Deputy General Secretary and Director of Program Development, said Dr Han had a pioneering spirit. “I have been blessed,” he said, “like so many who knew Dr Han, to see God work through him to provide Scriptures to Christians in China. He leaves a great spiritual legacy to so many in China and around the world.”

Together with Bishop K H Ting, Dr Han played a leading role in the creation and subsequent expansion of the Amity Printing Company. The company developed from being an idea, first made public early in 1985, to being an operational reality in less than three years and less than 20 years later it has produced more than 40 million Bibles. It was Dr Han who suggested to Bishop Ting that he invite UBS to participate in, and to support, the printing of Bibles in China and he was concerned with much of the day-to-day work in the early years of the company.

As well as facilitating the printing of Bibles and Scripture products for China, Dr Han also paved the way for UBS to support the Three Self Patriotic Movement /CCC in their distribution, helping to set up 70 Bible distribution centres and to provide 40 Bible distribution vans, and advancing various Bible translation projects in minority languages.

Kua Wee-Seng, the Coordinator of the UBS China Partnership, recalled that he first met Dr Han when interviewed by him for the position of Deputy General Manager at the Amity Printing Company in 1993.

“Since the first day I met him,” he said, “Dr Han has always been a help and encouragement to me, always patient to listen to me, always glad to share his wisdom with me, always prepared to offer his advice. He has been my mentor and counsellor, my teacher and tutor, my example and inspiration.”

Dr Han’s funeral service was held in Nanjing on February 9 and a memorial service took place the same day. The many who were present to pay their last respects to him included state and provincial leaders, civic leaders, church leaders and people from other walks of life as well as a group from overseas. Kua Wee-Seng said afterwards that the service had provided a testimony of how God had used Dr Han to reach and to touch the lives of many people from different segments of society. (788 words – CHINA.15.02.06)

Photo (Brian Blakeley): PRC94C5_27 Dr Wenzao Han

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