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## Chinese Theological Review [Vol. 6, 1990]

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# The Chinese Theological Review 1990

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## Preface

Since its inception, *The Chinese Theological Review* has carried translations of the growing number of articles from China which have begun to explore the relationship between religion and culture: these have dealt with the Biblical bases of three-self; traditional philosophical concepts consonant with Christian belief; Christian values expressed in modern literature; comparisons of traditional and Christian ethical systems; religious elements in the arts; etc. For Christians, such themes reflect a two-fold concern: first, to ground religion firmly in culture so that it can be seen as a valuable part of it, second, and more importantly, to probe the sources of a distinctly Chinese theology. In general, the articles which have found their way into the pages of this *Review* have dealt with one or another aspect of this quest, but none has provided an overview of Chinese Protestant thinking in twentieth century China.

Rev. Wang Weifan's article, "The Pattern and Pilgrimage of Chinese Theology," provides a welcome corrective to this situation. Rev. Wang sets the journey of Chinese theology in its historical and spiritual context and highlights "patterns" which he sees have emerged. These patterns reflect Chinese understandings of Christian experience and doctrine which have grown out of Christianity's encounter with Chinese culture and society. Though some of his conclusions may be considered controversial, his approach is sure to stimulate further discussion and research. This important essay provides essential background for a deeper understanding of the development of theological thinking in China over the last seventy years.

The Work Report of the Second (Enlarged) Plenary Session of the Joint Standing Committees of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC), and Bishop Ting's address to the same gathering should be read together as expressions of the different emphases among the Christian leadership towards issues facing church and society. The report was prepared on behalf of the two Standing Committees. Bishop Shen Yifan (Shanghai), who presented the report to the meeting, added by way of introduction some preliminary remarks reflecting his views on recent events. Bishop K.H. Ting's address invites the delegates to seek creative ways to resolve existing difficulties and meet new challenges in the current situation

"On Religion," by Rev. Yang Zhouhuai of Yanjing Theological Seminary, is an example of Christian apologetics argued on the basis of the cultural contributions of religion. Such arguments may seem uninspired to a western audience; yet research into the positive role of religion in history and culture have contributed to the wider sympathy for religion and religious believers among Chinese intellectuals and officials of various government bodies dealing with religion. After substantiating the positive role religion may play with regard to the arts, Rev. Yang calls in his own way for a more "hands-off" approach by the authorities: religion, he argues, should be allowed to "self-adjust" to social and historical changes.

A "social-scientific" view of religion is presented by the Hunan provincial Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) official, Liang Zhigao. Mr. Liang's views are representative of the more liberal appraisal of religion among many in the different levels of the RAB. He stresses the compatibility of religion and socialist society, the fact that religion will continue to exist under socialism, the importance of international religious contacts and the need for a codified

religious law. "Compatibility" is an important term, for it emphasizes a positive evaluation of religion and stands in sharp contrast to the view of "religion as opium" of an earlier period. Mr. Liang's assessment of religion is shared by many RAB officials, and although he continues to warn against the harmful influences of some religious practices, he is in general sympathetic to religion and religious believers.

Two essays focus on Protestant seminary graduates, their strengths and weaknesses and the problems they face working in the local churches. One is a summary of a survey of seminary graduates in Jiangsu province presented by an RAB official; the other a response to criticism of graduates which appeared in *Tian Feng*. Both essays shed some light on why, in spite of the acknowledged dearth of younger clergy, many seminary graduates wait at least three to four years before they are accepted for ordination.

The brief preface from *Selected Lyric Poetry of the Bible* is representative of the work being done by scholars outside the church and reveals the sympathetic approach as well as some of the limitations of such efforts. These studies, as well as the numerous translations of western works, have been welcomed by Christian scholars as needed additions to the resources available for the study of religion. Many of these, along with publications of Christian organizations, are listed in "The Seminarian's Bookshelf."

Other essays in this issue include an appreciation of Mr. Y.T. Wu, another in a series commemorating the tenth anniversary of his death (1989); a literary study of Christian values in the work of Xu Dishan, a well-known author of the 1930s; and a letter to his church by a student in a short-term lay training class at Nanjing Seminary.

In addition to sermons by the older generation of preachers, this issue includes offerings by Gao Ying and Li Yading, two younger graduates of Nanjing Theological Seminary who have pursued further studies in the United States.

Most of the contents of this sixth volume of *Die Chinese Theological Review* have been selected from various Chinese Protestant publications, including: *The Nanjing Theological Review*, journal of Nanjing Theological Seminary; the *Yanjing Seminary Journal* of Yanjing Theological Seminary in Beijing; *Tian Feng*, the monthly magazine of the Three Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council, published in Shanghai; and *Collected Sermons*, a publication of the Hangzhou Christian Council in Zhejiang.

The three articles by non-Christian writers originally appeared in the highly influential periodical, *Religion*, published by the Institute of Religious Studies at Nanjing University. Ten thousand copies of each issue are printed and distributed to government and Party offices concerned with religion at the national, provincial and county levels, as well as to universities and religious organizations all over the country. It has pioneered efforts to develop a view of religion which emphasizes the compatibility of religious belief and socialist society, and is highly esteemed by Christian and non-Christian scholars in the field.

Pinyin romanization of Chinese names and terms is used throughout, except where another form is widely used, or is known to be a personal preference. Biblical quotations follow the *New Revised Standard Version*.

As editor, I have been increasingly concerned to axe inclusive language in the *Review* as far as possible; yet dealing with translated materials poses a number of dilemmas. Inclusive language *per se* may not develop into a focus of concern in China as it has for English - speakers. Linguistically speaking, Chinese is less gender-specific than English; the word for God, for example, does not suggest that God is either male or female. For women, the issue is clearly the role of women in the life of the church; recognition of leadership and ordination especially. However, given the continued influence of feudal views of women and the influence of received theological views (mostly western), thinking about God and about men and women in society is clearly gender-specific. It would often be a misrepresentation to translate an author's words into inclusive language; we would lose sight of the fact that these issues have not yet been widely challenged in Chinese theology. This will continue to be a concern in editing this Review, and constructive responses from readers would be most appreciated.

I would like to thank the authors of the articles and sermons included in this volume for generously consenting to share their work. I am grateful to the translators: Peter Barry, Ewing W. Carroll, Jr., Duncan Hewitt, Craig Moran, Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau, Gotthard Ohlau, Francesca Rhys, Henry Rowold, Britt Towery, Charles Wilson and Philip L. Wickeri for their continued support of this endeavor, as well as to Eva Lai for typing the manuscripts and to the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia.

Janice Wickeri  
3 July 1991.  
Hong Kong.

## **The Second (Enlarged) Plenary Session of the Joint Standing Committees of the National Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council: Work Report**

Almost four years have passed since the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference of August, 1986. The Plenary has had to be postponed until now for various reasons. But thanks to God's grace, we can all assemble here today under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss our ministry. May the holy name of God the Father be glorified during this meeting.

Though the world situation has been unstable and in flux during the last four years, China, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, has continued to resolutely walk the socialist road. China's successes in economic and cultural construction, in the policies of reform and openness, in improvement in the standard of living, have attracted world attention. In spring and summer of last year, a tiny minority of supporters of bourgeois liberalization, with the support of international hostile forces, stirred up political turmoil and fomented a counter-revolutionary rebellion in Beijing, whose aim was the overthrow of the Communist Party and socialism. But due to stern measures adopted by the Party and the government, this political disturbance has finally been suppressed. The facts illustrate that the decision of the Party and the government was correct: The People's Republic was saved in the nick of time and stability was restored in the nation. During the unrest, we Christians were severely tested as well, but the situation in Christian circles was basically stable. A great many Christians had deep experiences of the suffering brought on by political unrest during the Cultural Revolution, so all of us desire stability for our country and society. During these recent events, church workers and Christians in some places were actively involved in curtailing the unrest. A variety of facts illustrate that a patriotic Christianity can become a stabilizing factor in our society.

In these last four years, the work of our church has continued to be reinstated and developed. After the "June Fourth Incident," the Party and the government have reaffirmed that the religious policy will not change. At a recent United Front work conference, General Secretary Jiang Zemin again expounded the Party's United Front policies towards religious circles and religious believers. All this provides the strong objective safeguards needed so that church work of all kinds can be carried forward. At present, every aspect of the church's ministry is steadily developing, for we maintain a constant witness of loving our country and loving the church; the Lord adds to our number day by day those who are being saved. At the behest of the Standing Committees of the National Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the China Christian Council (CCC), I would now like to present our work report to this plenary session.

### **God's Loving Guidance**

God's grace and love have been ever-present with us in the last four years. Colleagues and fellow Christians throughout China have followed the three-self patriotic road resolutely as they strive to build up the Chinese church, and progress has been great.

During these four years, the Standing Committees of the TSPM and C CC have met in joint session on four occasions. These business meetings, attended by the Chair- and Vice-chair persons, the President, Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General and General Secretary, have passed a number of important resolutions and set up a number of specialized committees. Through the common efforts of a broad constituency of Christians, significant steps have been taken to advance three-self and to make the management of the church more effective.

1. Propagating three-self patriotism in a variety of areas; adhering to the three-self patriotic path.

Activities commemorating patriots of the previous generation of the church have been held; commemorative articles have been published to encourage fellow Christians to advance unwaveringly on the three-self patriotic path. In September last year, solemn meetings commemorating the tenth anniversary of the death of the founder and leader of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, Mr. Y.T. Wu (Wu Yaozong), were held in Beijing and Shanghai. Later *A Short Biography of Y.T. Wu* and *A Collection of Commemorative Essays on the Occasion of The Tenth Anniversary of Y.T. Wu's Death* were published. In August 1988, another founding member of the TSPM, Mr. Liu Liangmo, passed away. A memorial service was held for him, and a short biography, his sermons, and a commemorative article were published. In the spring of 1988, meetings commemorating the hundredth birthday of the late Rev. T.C. Chao, a member of the Standing Committee of TSPM, were held in Beijing and Shanghai, and commemorative articles were also published. *Tian Feng* carried articles on Rev. H.H. Tsui (Cui Xianxiang), Bp. Z.T. Kaung (Jiang Changchuan), Mr. Li Zhaohuan, Mr. Feng Yuxiang, Mr. Zhang Boling, and those Christians who died during the 1911 Revolution and the anti-Japanese war (World War II) in order to remember these Chinese Christian patriots of previous generations.

We also related to national issues, such as the new period marked by the Open Policy and the Fortieth Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and we published articles advancing the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. We stressed patriotism in connection with biblical teaching, clarifying the attitude of Christians towards their motherland, explaining that love for the country and love for the church cannot be separated and so on.

Through statements in meetings and in published articles, we have frequently exposed and criticized the ways in which foreign hostile groups make use of Christianity to infiltrate China and further their subversive purposes, how they link up with all kinds of unlawful activities inside the country that flaunt a Christian banner. In this way we want to raise the patriotic vigilance of the broad masses of believers and safeguard the fruits of three-self patriotism of the Chinese church.

2. Advancing the building up of self-administration, self-support and self-propagation in our church; strengthening grassroots church work.

To ensure that the church is well-run on the three-self principle, the TSPM and CCC have set up a Theological Education Committee, a Publications Committee (formerly Publications

Work Research Group), a Church Order Committee and a Bible Publication Committee (formerly Committee to Publish the Bible in Simplified Characters).

In recent years, the Theological Education Committee has drawn up national guidelines for theological studies, adopted a year by year curriculum plan for the seminaries, compiled and published a theological curriculum (e.g. the *Chinese Protestant Theological Education Series*), and collected monies for the Chinese Protestant Theological Education Fund, etc., in order to promote the development of theological education in China.

The Publications Work Committee (along with the former Christian Literature Group) defined the guidelines for our church publication work and discussed a publishing program and coordination in matters of publication.

The Church Order Committee strongly recommended that the Three-Self associations and Christian Councils in each province, municipality and autonomous region should formulate an order suitable to local conditions. It has also drafted a system of church order for general national use. This draft is now being circulated for discussion and comment. Due to the fact that the majority of Three-Self organs and Christian Councils in most provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions have already drawn up trial forms of church order, the previous situation in which there were no guidelines at all has begun to be turned around.

Last Easter, the Bible Publication Committee and the former Committee to Publish the Bible in Simplified Characters published the complete Bible in simplified characters and a western-style reading format. Lately, a pocket edition of this Bible has also come out. Both editions have been welcomed by the masses of our fellow Christians. At the moment we are printing Bibles in national minority languages. Large quantities of all editions have been printed, greatly easing the scarcity of Bibles, satisfying the needs of the Christians, and at the same time giving the lie to those hostile foreign groups who use exaggerated reports of a paucity of Bibles in China for their anti-Chinese propaganda and efforts at infiltration.

The Hymn Committee has published a condensed hymnal, and recorded and distributed four cassette tapes of hymns taken from it. Hymnals have also been printed in several minority languages. These hymnals not only satisfy the needs of Christians from different nationalities, but also strengthen their ability to grow together on the basis of three-self patriotism.

To promote self-support, a conference on the problems involved was held in October, 1988, in Fuyang (Zhejiang province), attended by Three-Self and Christian Council leaders from a number of provinces and municipalities. Experiences in self-support in different areas were exchanged, and after discussion, a "Proposal on the Equitable Distribution of Church Property by Province" from the TSPM and CCC, was unanimously approved.

Most grassroots churches in our country suffer from a serious lack of clergy. This is a very weak aspect of our three-self and pastoral work. The Second Joint Meeting of the Two National Standing Committees in Chengdu (Sichuan province) in August 1987, was devoted to a discussion of strengthening church work at the grassroots. The resolutions passed at the meeting have been taken very seriously by churches throughout the country. In March and

April of 1988, the TSPM and CCC organized a preaching team to intenerate in the Nanyang and Pingdingshan areas of Henan province where the lack of church workers is especially serious. Their circuit preaching satisfied the spiritual needs of the believers at the grassroots and also raised their ability to recognize the true gospel. This very successful experience is already being extended to other provinces. During the 1987 fall term, Nanjing Theological Seminary began to offer a one-year course for middle-aged lay leaders from different provinces. This has been very successful and has strengthened the pastorate at the village and township levels. This experience has also been taken up by other provinces and seminaries.

3. Deepening the love of country and the love of church in people's hearts to elicit a constant stream of patriotic achievements to the glory of God and the service of humankind.

In these last few years, we have instituted regular education in the patriotic three-self principle and have vigorously implemented this principle in the building up of the church, deepening the love of country and the love for their church in people's hearts. Our witness, through glorifying God and serving humankind, has been very strong: participating actively in production, working selflessly, abiding by the law, devotion to one's duty, healing the sick and caring for the dying, enthusiastic service, love within the family, working for harmony in the neighborhood, helping those in difficulty, caring for orphans and widows, caring for the injured and the handicapped, taking in abandoned babies, turning in lost property, contributing money to relief efforts and much more. Christians who do these things say: "It is the duty of every Christian to wholeheartedly contribute to the four modernizations." They want to "embody the love of God and the love for the people in the movement to `achieve the four modernizations and vigorously develop China". They say: "Christians are in the world to make the world better," and "let society be filled with love". Many Christians have been named advanced workers, and some even have become model workers and red-flag pacesetters. There are also many Christian households that have been cited as model families. In areas with a concentration of Christians, the crime rate is very low, grain is delivered to the state conscientiously and enthusiastically, and the family planning policies have had success-these are recognized facts. Some grassroots churches have built hospitals, clinics, schools, kindergartens and other public facilities, which have drawn public praise. The great masses of believers also do their utmost to put down foreign infiltration and criminal and unlawful activities of every stripe, and they have been quite successful. It should be noted that loving the country, loving the church and following the road of three-self patriotism constitutes the mainstream of the Chinese church today.

4. Consolidating union and strengthening unity.

In Chinese churches, all former denominations now pursue a common path with three-self as the foundation, and they are moving toward unity. We have already entered the post-denominational stage. In the years following the restoration of the church, mutual acceptance and a spirit of wholehearted cooperation in ministry has been further carried forward. But in this time of reform and openness, the unified organization of our church has been tested by foreign influence, as well as by factors at home. The great majority of our fellow Christians still uphold the road towards unity, respecting varied expressions of faith and spreading the gospel with one heart and one mind. But in some places the majority of believers is unwilling

to fully respect some expressions of faith on the part of the minority. There is also a small number of Christians who exaggerate their own special characteristics, disregarding the foundation of the common faith which Christians share. All this creates friction, damaging the unity that our church has achieved on the basis of the love-country, love-church principle. In August 1987, the Joint Meeting of the Two Standing Committees devoted their discussion to this problem and passed a resolution on "Consolidating Union and Strengthening Unity." This resolution states:

a) "The majority of Christians participate in the Three-Self Movement. They make the independence of our church a reality; they love the country and the church; and they glorify God and serve humankind;

b) "Everybody should cooperate wholeheartedly; seek the common ground in the faith while reserving their differences; and practice mutual respect without attacking one another;

c) "There should be no denominational labels or people acting on their own; denominational organizations should not be restored nor should independent denominations be set up; international contacts should not promote denominationalism; and there should be no independent printing of materials of a denominational nature."

Following this meeting, the churches, together with the TSPM and CCC made appropriate arrangements in their religious life to better respect those among their fellow Christians with differing expressions of faith; while at the same time leading the believers on the road of love, patient unity and opposition to factionalism, separatism, and any deviation from the three-self principle.

5. Rationalizing relations between the Three-Self associations and the Christian Councils and churches.

The churches in our country united in 1958. At that time and under those historical circumstances, before a new church organization had been set up, the local Three-Self associations had to take over the business of administrating the church for a certain time. In promoting cooperation and developing church work, they made certain achievements. After 1980, Christian Councils were set up on all levels. When this was done, the circumstances in which it was necessary for the Three-Self associations to administer the church changed, but since old habits die hard, churches and Christian councils could not yet fully realize their own roles. In December, 1988, the Third Joint Meeting of the Standing Committees of the TSPM and the CC(' held a special discussion of the problem and passed a resolution that points out:

... in order to advance the building up of the church according to the three-self principle, it is more necessary than ever that the role of the Christian Councils as administrative structures be fully realized at all levels. To this end, this meeting reaffirms that the Three-Self organizations and the Christian Councils should, at all levels, divide their work and cooperate on the basis of each of their respective constitutions. Christian Councils at all levels should more effectively take up responsibility for church affairs, and Three-Self organs, as Christian patriotic

organizations, should more effectively develop their work as stipulated in the Three-Self constitution."

This decision has been discussed widely in the two bodies and in churches all over the country, and it has highlighted the matters of division of labor and cooperation between the two bodies.

In November last year, the national TSPM and CCC held their Fourth (Enlarged) Work Conference in Shanghai. The meeting reaffirmed the resolution of the Third Joint Meeting. The meeting stated: "The Three-Self Organizations are Chinese Christian organizations that express love for the country and love for the church. Their aim is not to serve as administrative bodies of the church. The responsibility of the Three-Self organizations is to guide the believers in law-abiding patriotism, to uphold the church's path of independence and self-administration, to assist the government in the implementation of its religious policy, and to develop service to the church and to society; in this way contributing to the upbuilding of socialist material and spiritual cultures and the preservation of world peace. The rationalization of relationships will allow fuller play to the specific function of the Three-Self Organizations.

"The Christian Council (or Church Affairs Committee) is the administrative arm of Chinese churches. Its responsibility is to run our churches more effectively according to the principle of self-administration, self-support and self-propagation; to develop theological education, undertake Christian publishing, and draw up a form of church order, etc. Furthermore, local churches' experience in building up the church according to the three-self principle has been very good. It is the responsibility of the church's administrative body to collect and summarize these experiences and make them more widely known. Rationalizing relationships means that the church administrative bodies on all levels should shoulder the task of more effectively administering the churches according to the three-self principle." The meeting also affirmed that the rationalization of relationships between the Three-Self associations and the Christian Councils and churches does not mean that each goes his own way, but that success relies on strengthened cooperation. The meeting pointed out: "Division of work and cooperation mean that the responsibilities of TSPM and CCC are divided, but that in implementing their respective duties coworkers in both bodies cooperate in concerted efforts and support each other." The meeting also clearly stated that it is a grave misunderstanding to think that the rationalization of relationships entails abolishing the Three-Self associations or the three-self principle.

The great majority of our fellow Christians is coming to realize this more clearly. They are carrying this rationalization forward and strengthening the division of labor and cooperation. This is clearly important for better adherence to three-self, for clarifying our direction, and for more effective administration of the church and the realization of overall unity.

#### 6. A new situation in foreign affairs work.

In the last four years, we have continued to build up contacts with churches and Christians from all over the world on a basis of mutual respect, equality and friendship, thus promoting understanding and oneness in the Lord.

In these years we have had a number of exchanges with overseas churches in Asia, North America, Western, Northern and Eastern Europe, and Oceania, as well as several visiting delegations from Africa, and, for the first time, a delegation of Taiwanese compatriots from the Presbyterian Church in Latin America. Archbishop Tutu of South Africa arrived just prior to our Fourth National People's Congress, and he wrote a special congratulatory message for it. The famous American evangelist Rev. Dr. Billy Graham visited China in 1988 at the invitation of both the Society for Friendship with Foreign Peoples and the China Christian Council.

Another first was the women's delegation and the delegation of theological students who went abroad. We have also sent some delegates to national denominational and worldwide religious conferences. All these activities reflect the spirit of mutual respect. The churches in our country have already entered the post-denominational era, but as the historical circumstances and backgrounds of churches vary from country to country, denominations still exist in some places. We respect them, just as they respect our non-denominational nature.

In the last few years, we made strong efforts to give fellow Christians overseas an understanding of the implementation of the policy of religious freedom in China, sharing with Christians all over the world the riches of grace that God has given the churches here. We continue to introduce the facts of the situation about our church life, so that they may pray more effectively for churches in China. We also hope that they will join us in giving thanks for the development of the Chinese churches and that they, together with us, will seek God's guidance for problems that still exist in our churches. We thank them for their unremitting efforts.

### **Vigilance in Times of Peace**

After reviewing the steady development of all areas of our church work in the last four years, we now need to take a sober look at the problems that still face us in the churches of China.

First, factors outside the church: Hostile foreign groups constantly change methods and tactics, stepping up their use of the churches for purposes of infiltration and damaging activities. Some among the anti-Chinese forces have organized a so-called "Serve China International," which publishes propaganda under the name of international organizations, brazenly stating that they want to prop up the so-called "underground church." Others send out so-called "nonresident missionaries," who undertake itinerant activities; still others, on the basis of our country's open policy, use cultural cooperation, medical work, or joint ventures, English teaching or travel as a pretext for their attempts at infiltration. And some have not only set up all kinds of "seminaries" outside the country, training personnel for infiltration who are then dispatched to the interior, but have also set up so-called "wilderness seminaries," schooling reactionaries and creating disorder all over. Still others brazenly come to our country to rope in young people, attracting them to go abroad to receive "theological training" and then act as their tools for infiltration. Still others use radio broadcasts or the dissemination of large amounts of literature to issue their orders, scheming in vain to make Chinese Christians and churches follow their command and control. To use Christianity for

all kinds of infiltrating activities is an important component of those hostile foreign groups' strategy of "peaceful evolution" (towards capitalism), the goal of which is to split the church in our country and destroy the unity between the Christians and the great masses of the people, and to incite the people to adopt a hostile attitude towards the People's Government and the Party. Therefore, we need to be on the alert in order to resolutely expose and suppress these activities.

At the same time, some people with ulterior motives in our own country use Christianity to set up all kinds of criminal and illegal activities, posing a serious danger to social order and to the interests of the nation. They practice fraud, defile women, wreck life and health, spread rumors and slander, confuse and poison people's minds and destroy the peace of the society. Some even go to great lengths to incite Christians to resist the leaders of the Party and the government, in their efforts to destroy the Three-Self Movement. Of those who engage in unlawful and reactionary activities, some are self-styled intolerant evangelists, and some even have set up reactionary organizations. Some people and groups among them have actually linked up with hostile foreign groups, who have provided them with all kinds of encouragement and financial help.

The great majority of our fellow Christians follow the love-country, love-church path as well as the three-self principle. Therefore, those enemies inside and outside the country who believe that they can use Christianity for infiltration and damaging activities hope in vain, and their schemes to reassert foreign control over our church have slim chance of success. But we can never allow these unlawful, reactionary forces to spread and we will resolutely suppress their dangerous activities directed against our country and our church.

Factors within the church itself: In the last few years a small number of people in some places have begun to stress denominational characteristics, denying the common faith of the great masses of believers, with an eye to flying their own colors and restoring denominations. With explicit or implicit encouragement from some foreign groups, this centrifugal tendency increasingly strays from the path of three-self patriotism, thus endangering our church's unity.

At the same time, there are shortcomings and deficiencies in the work of the TSPM and CCC and the church that may provide an advantage to the hostile forces inside and outside the country who wish to split the church.

In recent years, under the new situation created by China's policies of openness and reform, we have become too easily satisfied with the prompt restoration and development of our church work on a superficial level, and though there have been certain achievements, our efforts slackened overall in the work of educating ministers, lay workers and the great masses of believers in the patriotic three-self principle. Some people misunderstood reform and openness and thought that the banner of three-self patriotism could be dropped or lowered, and that vigilance against hostile groups at home and abroad who use religion for destructive and infiltrating activities could be slackened. Lawless elements inside and outside the country seized this chance.

The Three-Self associations and the Christian Councils have, to a certain extent become bureaucratic on all levels and have insufficient links with the Christian masses. We have done far too little in understanding the believers' thoughts and feelings, in satisfying their legitimate religious needs, in wholeheartedly doing pastoral work, in preserving the legitimate rights of the churches and in many other areas. Some believers are disappointed with the Three-Self associations and Christian Councils and the church and easily fall prey to the instigation or recruitment of hostile groups who couch their demands in religious language.

The number of believers grows daily, but there is a serious and growing lack of pastoral workers who have received adequate theological education. Our theological education and our training of lay workers fall far short of demand, and our publishing work is also far from sufficient. In many places Christians are "like sheep without a shepherd." Hungry people are not choosy about food, and this situation gives hostile groups the opening they seek.

The work of building up our church is still formidable. In many provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions Three-Self associations and Christian Councils have drawn up trial forms of church order, but there are many cases where this is not being followed. For various reasons, there are very serious internal tensions between Three-Self associations and Christian Councils and churches in some areas. This is severely damaging to the witness and the vitality churches should possess. The church is the body of Christ, and if the organism of the church is not sound, all kinds of diseases can naturally take advantage and come in.

### **Uphold Three-Self; Run the Church Well**

The future prospects for our church are excellent, but there still exists a potential crisis. In order to do a good job of building a Chinese church that is independent and compatible with our socialist era and which can seriously tackle foreign infiltration, unlawful activities inside the country and tendencies toward division inside the church, the basic path lies in adhering to the path of three-self patriotism and thoroughly applying the three-self principle in all areas of church work.

Uphold three-self; run the church well: This suggests that the Three-Self Movement in our country has already entered a new stage; that is, from the stage of restoring the self-rule of the Chinese church it has now proceeded to the stage of more effectively building up a church with Chinese characteristics. In this stage, we are confronted with many pressing responsibilities.

1. It is necessary to strengthen and improve education in three-self patriotism.

There is no doubt that church construction must follow biblical truth and church tradition. But the building up of the church must also be done according to God's guidance in any given age. For the Chinese church this means that we need to follow the three-self road on which God is guiding us in the present age. This has been the long-term goal of many Chinese Christians for centuries, and it is a summary of the Chinese churches' experience during the last forty years. When the Three-Self Movement was initiated, it was a patriotic movement of Chinese Christians for political purposes. But with the passage of time, we see more and more

clearly the biblical basis and theological significance of this movement and realize that it brings together the feelings and hopes of Chinese Christians who love their country and their church. Today, faced with hostile groups inside and outside the country who attempt to use the church for destructive ends and as a means to infiltrate the country, undermine the good name of the church and endanger the interests of our motherland and our people, we are even more aware of the necessity and value of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

But because education in three-self patriotism has slackened for a period of time, because the propagation of three-self patriotism was not sufficiently targeted toward the current thinking of our fellow Christians, and because there are still some faults and inadequacies in the work of the TSPM and CCC, education in three-self has not yielded good results. Some Christians have lost their sense of direction. To administer the church well in the future, we have to strengthen and improve our three-self education. First of all, we must strive to undertake education in patriotism. "Three-self" and "patriotism" have always belonged together, and the Three-Self Movement is the embodiment of the Chinese Christians' national dignity and feeling of national responsibility. When we talk about patriotism today, it has the added meaning of identification with the leadership of the Communist Party and following the path of socialism. The leadership of the Party and the socialist system are the historical choice of the Chinese people and the foundation of the People's Republic of China. If we would leave behind the Party leadership and the socialist system, China would inevitably be reduced to a dependent of capitalist imperialist countries and would never become rich and strong. The great mass of our fellow Christians needs to constantly raise their patriotic consciousness. Only in this way can they better uphold the three-self patriotic road. Secondly, we need to be linked to our fellow Christians' true thoughts and feelings to carry out a vibrant and vigorous education in three-self patriotism. We must start with politics to raise everybody's consciousness, but also reason on the basis of biblical, theological and church history to increase people's understanding of the justice and necessity of the three-self patriotic road. Thirdly, we in the TSPM and CCC need to overcome our shortcomings, rationalize our relationships, be in close communication with the Christian masses and set an example in loving the country and loving the church. Only if we teach by our example as well as by our words can our efforts at education in three-self patriotism be effective. We should also build the church well in accordance with the three-self principle so that her practice may be a strong witness to the Gospel, to increase Christians' understanding of three-self patriotism. The TSPM and CCC and churches everywhere have to constantly explore and summarize their experiences in three-self patriotic education and to persist in this work without slacking.

2. It is necessary to continue mobilizing the great masses of believers to engage in the construction of the four modernizations, and to contribute to the two socialist cultures (material and spiritual).

Christians and the broad masses of the motherland have a common destiny and a common yearning to see China thriving and prosperous and her people healthy and happy. We must actively carry out the four modernizations in everyday life together with the great masses of the people, and contribute our strength to the development of the socialist spiritual and material culture. Speaking in terms of faith, this is a Christian duty in this life, and a witness that is required of us. If we do not love the Chinese people whom we have seen, if we do not

happily contribute our strength for them, how can we say that we love the Father whom we have not seen'? In recent years, religious circles all over the nation have held large meetings to commend groups and individuals who are "advanced in serving the four modernizations." There have been quite a few Christians among them and they are models for us all. We need to constantly enlarge the contingent of such advanced patriots in the church, so that the excellent witness of loving the country and loving the church, glorifying God and serving humankind will shine before the people even more. In these last few years, Three-Self associations and Christian Councils at all levels and the churches at the grassroots, have set up public service facilities, which have been favorably received by society. We should not only encourage individual believers to engage themselves more effectively in the enterprise of the four modernizations, but we should also rally the TSPM and CCC and the grassroots churches to set up, according to the needs of society and their objective strengths, all kinds of medical services, cultural, educational and social welfare facilities thus doing their bit for the great cause of the four modernizations and enhancing the self-sacrificing service and the spirit of universal love to the masses that Christians should live out.

3. We must earnestly develop self-administration, self-support and self-propagation in the church.

If we want to run the church well according to the three-self principle, we must strengthen self-administration, self-support and self-propagation.

Firstly, if the church in China is to be administered well by Chinese believers themselves, there are many serious problems to be overcome. Take for example the question of church order: We must have a systematic order for the life of our church in order to overcome all kinds of chaos and irregular phenomena. We need to vigorously propagate and explicate this church order among our fellow Christians; and it is the duty of the TSPM and CCC to set examples for our fellow Christians to follow. We must frequently check the state of implementation of church order and improve it through constant summing up our of experience so that the order can be made more realistic and complete. For example, with regard to the democratic administration of the church, all levels of the TSPM and the CCC and the grassroots churches should follow a democratic system of management which includes elections, meeting procedure, democratic centralism, public accounting of finances together with democratic control by the believers. If three-self is to be built up in the interests of the whole church, vertical and horizontal communication must be strengthened between the two bodies on all levels and the grassroots churches. All TSPM and CCC decisions on a national level should be implemented by these two bodies and the grassroots churches according to the local situation at all levels. Another example is the problem of consolidating and extending our unity: We need to strengthen the unity between believers of different traditions. In handling this situation, we need to follow the declaration "Consolidate Relationships and Strengthen Unity," made in August 1987 by the Joint Meeting of the Standing Committees of the TSPM and the CCC. Respect for different religious expressions and proper arrangements for religious life must be based on what benefits unity founded on loving the country and loving the church, and not what is contrary to this unity. We also want to extend our unity towards believers who are not related to the TSPM and the CCC. On the one hand we will try hard to do good pastoral work and serve this small number of believers well, and on the other hand, we will give them

strong ideological leadership. The one should not be overemphasized at the expense of the other.

Secondly, in developing self-support we are faced with many responsibilities. To strengthen our ability to be self-supporting, we need both to guard against rigid apportionment of expenses and to enthusiastically propagate the importance of self-support in order to better mobilize believers to actively contribute. We must mention here that the circumstances in different churches are not the same: Love must exist between the different churches all belonging to one body, and a spirit of mutual aid expressed in mutual economic support. We need to take every possible measure to strengthen the economies of the two bodies on the provincial level, so that their church work can be developed well in the interests of the whole province. Some municipal and provincial level Three-Self associations and Christian Councils have set up self-support funds to aid young graduates of theological seminaries and church workers in difficult economic circumstances - this is a very desirable solution. We also need to make sure that churches in all places that have set up enterprises compare their gains and losses, thus helping the churches to take correct management measures so that they can reap economic gains and strengthen self-support. Another example: We accept donations from friendly overseas organizations or individuals, when they are made in a benevolent spirit and from a loving heart, with no strings attached. But we need to maintain the principle of self-support, and should not solicit money from foreign individuals or organizations for our churches and their work. We have to be especially alert that hostile overseas groups do not use donations as a means for their attempts at infiltration.

Finally, self-propagation is the most important aspect of three-self. Our responsibility to do this well is very great indeed. For example, we need to train a large number of young and middle-aged evangelists who will be vessels for the Lord's use in the churches in our time. We need to train them to have a clear understanding of the right direction to take in loving the country and loving the church, to engender in them a self-sacrificing attitude, and to help them develop in spirit, morals, wisdom, physical health and community life. All theological schools and all training classes should follow our national theological guidelines, and seriously exchange experiences as often as possible. They should especially listen to the feed-back from those who have graduated or completed their courses, realize the strengths and weaknesses of our work and constantly improve it. Another example: We need to strongly develop our publication work in accordance with our church's publication guidelines, train Christian writers, and satisfy the pressing needs of pastors, lay workers and the great masses of believers. We need to draw up such a program without delay, clarify division of labor and strengthen coordination, to see an early flourishing of church publication work. This will also help us in mounting effective resistance to publications used by hostile foreign groups for their infiltration activities. Again, we must strongly resist all kinds of heretical beliefs and reactionary thinking in the guise of religion, using the truth of the Bible and patriotic thinking to lead the believers on the right way. Besides the need for more books, teaching materials and tapes of this nature, we should do more to organize preaching teams; our experience with this deserves to be shared. We also need to actively develop theological dialogue which can lead to the development of a theology with Chinese characteristics. We must break away from the set pattern of theological thinking of the colonial era, integrate China's splendid tradition and present trends and refer to trends in western and Third World theologies as an aid to our own theological thinking. Chinese theological

seminaries should not only be places of study, but should also gradually become research centers on self-propagation.

4. We must protect the church's legal rights and interests to assist party and government in better implementing the policy of religious freedom.

Since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress, the Party and government have taken measures to end the chaotic situation and set things right, strongly and thoroughly implementing the policy religious freedom. As everyone knows, this has been highly successful on a national level, and most Chinese Christians have been strongly encouraged by this. But we cannot but see that in some places there are still many difficulties and obstacles to the thorough implementation of the policy of religious freedom. This holds true especially in the area of implementing policy about church properties, where steps have to be taken to find reasonable solutions to problems concerning church buildings and meeting points. Three-Self associations and Christian Councils at all levels and the grassroots churches are patriotic religious organizations. They have the right as well as the responsibility to protect the legitimate rights of the religious organizations and their members as spelled out in the constitution, the laws and government policies, and to help Party and government to overcome all kinds of difficulties and resistance to more thoroughly implement the policy of religious freedom. Errors in the implementation of religious policy do not only hurt the religious feelings of the believers and harm the churches' rights and interests; they also negatively affect the Party's prestige in society, are harmful to the relationship between the party and the masses of believers and have a negative influence on unity and stability in our society. We should be friends with the Party and the Government, offering forthright and welcome advice. It is our unshirkable responsibility to voice our objections and criticisms of any violation of the freedom and rights of religious believers and their faith, or of any harm done to the legitimate interests of the church; and we have to demand that these mistakes be rectified.

5. Correctly handle our relations with the churches in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

We want to further contacts with churches and Christians in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. In Hong Kong, our contacts should be undertaken in the spirit of the "Sino-British Joint Declaration" and the "Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Zone" and shaped by mutual non-subordination, mutual non-interference, and mutual respect. After 1997, just as in the past, the churches on the mainland must not meddle in any way in the Hong Kong churches' affairs, and it is our hope that on their part, Hong Kong churches will respect the mainland churches. Only in this way can normalized contact, visiting and sharing develop in a sustained and healthy fashion. This spirit of the "Three Mutuals" should also shape our contacts with churches and believers from Macau and Taiwan.

6. Continue to develop international contacts.

Our work in international contacts should be guided by the principle of differentiation. On the one hand, we should continue to develop and deepen our connections with overseas

churches and believers on the basis of mutual respect and peaceful friendship. On the other hand, we must firmly resist the overseas anti-Chinese infiltrators who do not recognize our three-self principle, and rumor mongers and mudslingers who come to China wearing the cloak of religion.

In the last forty years, the church in our country has consistently held high three-self and has changed its image as a foreign religion, making great efforts to build up a church with Chinese characteristics. This has been a great witness to the gospel. But three-self certainly does not mean self-isolation. Only if the Chinese church has Chinese characteristics, can she become a part of the worldwide church with an even greater witness. And only if the Chinese church is part of the Church universal can the profound significance of her quest for national characteristics shine forth.

We welcome contacts with all overseas churches and believers who are willing to respect our three-self principle, whether they are mainline or evangelical, and we would like to undertake exchange visits and sharing with them.

Committee Members, our Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement has already seen forty years. During the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement we reflected on the past in the light of the present and could not but feel that the road of three-self patriotism is the correct path, one on which God has been leading us in his love for the Chinese church. To build the church up well according to the three-self principle is even more strongly God's call and trust to us in these days. Let us adhere to the path of three-self patriotism, let us uphold the three-self principle in all kinds of church work and in the building up of each local church, so that we may pray more earnestly and work more devotedly, and, relying on God's great power and might, witness to the gospel by glorifying God and serving humankind, achieving true accomplishments for the church, as we move towards the opening of the Fifth National Chinese Christian Conference.

(This report was delivered to the meeting on 22 August 1990 by Bishop Shen Yifan on behalf of the Standing Committees of the TSPM and ('CC.)

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translated by Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau with Janice Wickeri.

## Address to the Plenary Session – K.H. Ting

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 was a watershed in the history of our Chinese Christianity. Prior to 1949, -Chinese Christianity had basically been a dot on the map of foreign missionary societies. Strictly speaking, it was not yet a Chinese Christianity, but merely a branch of foreign Christianity in China. Little wonder the Chinese people considered Christianity a foreign religion. 1949 began a new page for Christianity in China.

In general terms, the history of Christianity in China over the past forty years can be divided into two periods. The first period saw the resolution of the question of who would be in control of Chinese Christianity. Our answer was very clear: the business of the administration, decision-making, support and Christian propagation of Chinese churches would be seen to by Chinese Christians ourselves. The issue which had to be resolved in this first period was that of the sovereignty of Chinese Christianity. If people are to take our church's message seriously, an independent, self-governing China has to have an independent, self-governing church.

In the Book of Acts, we see that the earliest Christians were all ethnic Jews who were also Jewish religious believers. While they preached Jesus as Messiah only within the confines of Judaism, they maintained ethnic Jewish religious and cultural traditions. But we see that as the gospel spread to non-Jewish peoples, a new problem arose: should Jewish religious and cultural traditions accompany it, and should non-Jewish believers be required to observe them? The fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts tells us that Peter, James and Paul held a meeting about this in Jerusalem, and that the Spirit led them to a common realization: as long as non-Jewish believers accepted the basic faith of the gospel, they should establish churches which were non-Jewish and which had a character of their own. In current parlance, we would say churches that were independent, self-administering, self-propagating and self-supporting.

It is due to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) that we have modified our relationship to the Chinese people, that we are no longer outsiders, and that the Chinese people have changed their opinion of us. We are increasingly accepted by non-Christian Chinese. And it is precisely due to the TSPM that we were able to endure many onslaughts when the leftist line dominated Chinese politics and even during Cultural Revolution, thereby winning greater sympathy from the people. These are the conditions that led to the appraisal found in Document 19\* to the effect that "The status of religion in China has already undergone a fundamental change"; in religious circles, it continues, "by far the great majority of them are patriotic, law-abiding, and support the socialist system. Only a very small minority oppose the Constitution and socialism to the extent of colluding with anti-revolutionaries and other hostile elements." Although there have been obstacles to the implementation of religious policy during the last ten years, we have, after all, repossessed over six thousand church buildings. Can we imagine that this would have been possible without the TSPM?

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\*Document 19, "The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Question of Religion During China's Socialist Period," is an authoritative document on religion and religious policy circulated internally by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in March, 1982.

We know that an independent Chinese church is not isolationist. It is part of the church universal; moreover, it is precisely because of its independence that it is able to develop more fully the special characteristics which enable it to contribute something to the universal church.

The second period I mentioned above is marked by our efforts to make the Chinese church a well-run church while continuing to maintain our independence and self-administration. This means making it a church in which self-administration, self-support and self-propagation are done well. Chinese Christians do not want to see their church run in a way unbecoming a church. To see the church well-run is the fervent hope of all church-loving Christians. Whoever is able to run the church well will be welcomed by its members and enjoy their love and esteem. At the same time, the good management of the church is a task entrusted to us by our country, because the nation requires that all aspects of work be done well, that all work should be done to the people's satisfaction. We cannot imagine that it would be good for the nation if the rest of the nation's work were well done, but the church was in a shambles. Thus, love for country and love for church converge in an effectively run church. The proposition that the church should be well-run encourages Christians and raises the prestige of the TSPM. It is a powerfully unifying slogan.

Comrade Deng Xiaoping made the following statement last year: "We must concentrate our attention on several matters which will bring happiness and satisfaction to the people." In order to run the church well, we must bring happiness and satisfaction to that sector of the population who are Christians. We must enable the TSPM to rectify relations with them and strengthen unity with them. We must expand the scope of our unity and increase the numbers of patriotic Christians who uphold socialism, who will join in making the church well-run and in developing it into one of the better organizations in the nation, a shining banner of the universal church.

One of the requirements for effective administration of the church is to raise its quality. This is a different matter from increasing church membership. If we press for greater numbers and pay no attention to quality, the church cannot be well-run. In fact this is something which cannot be allowed in a well-run church.

While we endeavor to run the church well according to the three-self principle, the Three-Self associations and Christian councils at all levels must continue to stress the (correct) implementation of religious policy as our most important task. We receive daily letters and frequent visits from churches and Christians all over the country regarding reasonable solutions to the problem of suitable venues for religious activities and the recovery of church property for purposes of self-support. These letters and visits exemplify the fact that there is still much to be done in the area of implementation of the religious policy. These letters and visits also show the writers' and visitors' confidence in us and the expectations they have of us. We must show them every hospitality and do our utmost to assist them, while, by means of the TSPM and CCC, we do all we can to establish wholehearted implementation of the religious policy, and maintain the legitimate rights of Christianity. If we remain unconcerned and do nothing practical, it will be rather difficult for our two national bodies to hold high three-self patriotism. No matter how well we

expound our principle, people will find it very difficult to listen. When Comrade Li Ruihuan was in Tianjin he said: "The mood of the masses is the number one signal for policy-making." I agree. The implementation of religious policy and a well-run church are urgent hopes of the masses. We must not treat them lightly.

The issue of a well-run church is already one of some years' standing. I hope that our colleagues nationwide are aware of its importance and will do more to adjust the content and style of our work and our work teams in this direction. This is the first point I want to make today.

The second is this: for Chinese Christianity the period of denominationalism is behind us, and Christians of all church backgrounds have been able to come together. One of the primary reasons we have been able to do so is that denominationalism had a short history in China and Chinese Christians' denominational attitude was rather weak. Today it is even less common for new Christians to belong to any sort of denomination. But we must admit that the former denominations of some of our colleagues have rather prominent characteristics in matters of faith, and because of this problems of unity have not been entirely resolved in some areas. I think we must highlight the aspects of this.

On the one hand, we must reiterate that for the sake of unity, we must show respect for those Christians and colleagues with special characteristics in matters of faith and worship. These things must not be overlooked for convenience's sake. For the sake of three-self patriotic unity, we safeguard and respect special characteristics and do not seek to impose uniformity. Uniformity in faith is not a New Testament principle. It displeases some Christians and is thereby harmful to unity. We must make a distinction between respect for special characteristics and the revival of denominations. We ought to exercise caution in labeling people as denominational revivalists. We know that having bishops in no way indicates the implementation of the diocesan system, even less is it a revival of Anglicanism or of some other denomination in which bishops are found; just as having elders does not indicate the revival of Presbyterianism. In the same way worshipping on a Saturday and the rite of humility before Communion do not mean the revival of the Seventh Day Adventists. All these are done for the sake of attending to special characteristics and in order to unite increasing numbers of people under the rubric of Three-Self and the CCC. We do these things precisely to avoid the revival of denominations. Uniformity achieved by painting everything with the same brush may be convenient, but some Christians will feel they are being treated as outsiders, and this is harmful to unity. It is my belief that everyone should stress unity, and not allow the old mood of denominationalism to damage our unity unawares. Those who are in the majority must show greater concern for those in the minority, that our unity may be strengthened.

We know that it would be impossible to unite Buddhism, Taoism, Islam and Christianity. But even within Christianity itself, there is a certain multiformity in matters of faith that cannot be avoided. Within the New Testament there are several different understandings of Christ. A situation in which only one faith or one form of worship is permitted, producing conformity or uniformity of faith, is what many Christians fear. It is only through respect for special characteristics in matters of faith and worship that three-

self patriotism and unity can be achieved. Matters of faith, including ecclesiology, are extremely sensitive. For quite a number of people within the church, whether to use the Chinese term *shen* or *shangdi* when referring to God is no small matter, but rather a significant matter involving faith and people's sentiments. In some places, the church authorities are not terribly sensitive. It is not only that power over individual church's budget and personnel is concentrated in their hands under the name of Three-Self or the two national bodies, even who will preach the sermon is not decided through seeking a consensus of local Christians' expectations. This raises the specter of conformity or uniformity of faith. I think it is worth considering whether things really need to be done in such a fashion. These things impinge on the question of running the church well in a democratic spirit.

The other side of this is that I would ask those colleagues in the minority to pay attention to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 3, and make an effort to see more of the unity we have been given by Christ in the essentials of faith, and not over-emphasize or exaggerate sectarian or denominational characteristics, "holding fast to one point while neglecting others." Christ did not die for one particular sect or denomination. He redeemed all those who believe in him, no matter what their denominational background. It is as Paul said in the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians: "I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says `Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say `Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." Since the Spirit already moved so many Christians from other denominational backgrounds to confess Jesus as Lord how can we treat them as outsiders, saying such things as that they are not saved? We must first of all affirm our common ground as part of the Chinese people, affirm our common ground as those whom Christ loves and has redeemed, affirm our common ground in following the path of three-self patriotism and only then reserve those small differences of whatever Christian denomination and request that these be shown reasonable respect. This will bring us closer to the great unity of three-self. I hope that such colleagues will do education among their own constituencies to respect other Christians and not spread disdain for others; that they will not, by words or tone, give the impression that other Christians have not been saved. Only in this way can unity be strengthened. This is the second point I wish to make.

My third point: the mass base of Three-Self is now deeper and stronger than at any time in the past, but we Chinese Christians are a long way from realizing the larger unity of Three-Self. We must not rest content within the confines of the two national bodies, the TSPM and CCC. We here today, are, of course, leaders within these two bodies at many levels, yet, in order to enlarge and implement unity, we should at the same time see ourselves as servants and representatives of the legitimate rights of Chinese Christianity throughout the nation. We must make contact with, serve and unite with the whole of the Chinese Christian community, including those parts which have as yet no contact or insufficient contacts with our two national bodies. And this is not all, for it is those parts which are the main targ<sup>et</sup> antagonistic groups overseas and because of this they have become objects of contention and have been made use of to infiltrate China. If we pay no attention to this group, then in fact we are closing the door on a considerable number of Christians. It should be said that as long as one accepts Jesus Christ as Lord, and reveres one and the same Bible as we do, as long as one does not act counter to the law, and is not counter-revolutionary, we should reach out the hand of service

and enable everyone to gradually return to the flock on the basis of fellowship among members of the same family who love the Lord and the nation.

Recently, under the auspices of the provincial Religious Affairs Bureau, members of the Jiangsu section of the national TSPM CCC took a fact-finding trip to Lianshui County. In that county are eighty-eight officially recognized meeting points as well as

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ninety-nine others not yet officially recognized as such. Though this is the case, many among those ninety-nine welcomed contact with and help from the Three-Self association. In fact, the majority of those ninety-nine had already established connections with the officially recognized grassroots meeting points, had specific times to meet and discuss their ministry, and accepted their guidance on a county level. That county stresses enlarging the greater unity, accepting pluralism in terms of faith and doing nothing that might be interpreted as interfering in matters of faith or as leading to conformity or uniformity in such matters. Because of this, relations there are good and the situation is highly beneficial to stability and unity. Three-Self associations and Christian Councils should not force themselves upon people in matters of faith, should seek the common ground, and should respect others' special characteristics in matters of faith. This principle is not out of date.

For a variety of reasons, the number of large and small meeting points in various areas which have not been recognized is great. It is our belief that the majority of the members of such meeting points are law-abiding citizens contributing to socialist modernization. They include in their number intellectuals and progressives; those engaged in illegal activities are a tiny minority. Forty years of experience tells us that the use of strong-arm methods would only force them to break up into smaller groups or to go underground. This would not be conducive to stability and unity and is precisely what our foes, both domestic and overseas, are hoping for. I believe we can only do what Lianshui County is to some extent doing already; which is to change our closed-door policy, and allow colleagues of all levels of the two bodies and clergy and church workers to add to their burden the task of serving these groups and uniting with them. In this way, with some effort, the masses will be united, and if there are hostile elements or enemies mixed in among the members of these meeting points, they will be isolated, exposed and more easily dealt with.

In some areas at present, certain bodies are in the process of closing down all unrecognized meeting points; that is, home worship gatherings, without making any distinctions among them. This is due to the fact that they do not understand the situation. I think colleagues from the TSPM and CCC should approach these bodies in the nicest possible way to explain the situation, saying that to proceed in this manner, lumping these meeting points together, is harmful to stability, and does no good to the nation, the society or the church. There are many good Christians in these meeting points. They are also limbs of the body of Christ and we ought to protect them. We cannot take plan in indiscriminately eliminating their meeting points, otherwise the TSPM and CCC will be unable to unite the masses, and will be useless to both the church and the nation. This is something that we must make clear in the most sincere manner to all related groups.

Not long ago, at a National United Front Conference, Comrade Jiang Zemin said in his speech to the united front cadres: "We must conscientiously do well in our work among patriotic religious circles

to strengthen and enlarge the united front between the Party and religious believers of every ethnic group, to facilitate mutual respect and unity between the masses who are religious believers and those who are not, and to draw their wills and energies to the construction of the four modernizations under socialism. We must unite the patriotic strength which relies on religious circles, ... and conscientiously change the present situation in which in some areas the support and mobilization of religious organizations is insufficient to combat unhelpful underground forces by lawful means."

We are all members of a Christian patriotic organization. Where Comrade Jiang speaks of relying upon and supporting our patriotic religious organization, and mobilizing its strength, not only to enlarge the already formed united front in Christianity, but to enlarge the scope of this united front, in order to unite with the Christian masses and draw their will and strength into the construction of the four socialist modernizations, to fully rely upon, support and mobilize Christian patriotic strength, I feel that this shows great trust in us and it should enable us to be more fully and positively aware of the function of our two organizations. The TSPM and CCC cannot rest content with providing jobs for some people, with maintaining the situation as it is. Our vision should go beyond this, to unite greater numbers of Christians. These are my thoughts on the basis of what Comrade Jiang Zemin said.

Here we impinge on the question of personnel for the two organizations. Are there really no qualified people from our churches? In forty years, the number of Christians has grown from 750,000 to five million. Among these five million there surely must be many patriotic, church-loving, knowledgeable Christians: useable, trustworthy and talented people. However, this fact has not been reflected in the composition of our leadership or working groups. Most of those in our leadership are 1940s-era people, next are those few who have been around since the 1950s. These people are already advanced in

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age. In normal circumstances, they would be considered past retirement age. Our practical work corps is also very weak; there are few people to do the work, and quite a number of them do not have strong Christian training and some do not even have Christian faith. They are not of much use in uniting believers. Such circumstances are related to the expectations the TSPM and CCC can have of their own functions. If the two organizations really want to realize their potential, if they really expect to solidify the strength of the believers and attract greater numbers of believers to unite with us, then they must throw open the gates, and boldly trust in and use many new people, and in the course of doing so, train them to become a new generation of patriotic, church-loving Christians who will be the mainstay of the church at all levels. If some emerge who are not worthy of this trust, so long as they are found out, it does not matter much. I might mention in passing that a special characteristic of Christianity is that lay Christians occupy an important position. Positions of leadership need not be limited to ordained clergy or Christian professionals. There should also be lay Christians from other fields among them, especially those who have made important contributions to the nation and to socialism and who have prestige among Christians. To avoid creating a gap in leadership, it is the opinion of all of us at this meeting that we must strive to greatly reduce the median age of our leadership and mainstay work groups at all levels, paying special attention to increasing the proportion of women and lay people.

Finally we must broaden our vision, see the places and people that lie beyond us and strengthen our personnel.

All of us here have come to a deep realization that we must run the church well. There are a great many aspects to this, and many problems. I have done my best to put forward some ideas on three issues I consider urgent; I hope you will consider them on their merits.

*f Tian Feng*, November, 1990, pp. 20-23. translated by Janice Wickeri.

# The Pattern and Pilgrimage of Chinese Theology - Wang Weifan \*

-the Way knows us,  
but we do not know the Way

## 1

The first generation of Chinese theologians did not appear on the scene until the time of the May Fourth Movement, more than one hundred years after the entrance of Protestant Christianity into China. According to Wu Lei-chuan, writing in the 1920s, this was because:

Christianity had relied upon the force of the western power to enter China. The literati, therefore, had a poor opinion of Christianity, which was compounded by the fact that the first missionaries they came into contact with were not well educated. ... Because the western missionaries had not delved into Chinese culture ... the Christianity they brought to China was viewed with contempt by the literati. ... This however, was due neither to the inadequacy of Christianity itself, nor to the fact that Chinese scholars refused to accept the true light of faith.

Another reason for the delay in developing a Chinese theology was suggested in 1950 by T. C. Chao:

Protestant Christianity in China overemphasized education, medical work, publishing and relief activities ... thus inflating the function of body and neglecting matters of the heart and mind, in this way forgetting that which is central to Christian faith. ... The weakest aspect of Christianity became the church itself, and the weakest aspect of the church was its doctrinal theology.

Chao went on to argue that because "westerners were in control, they were unwilling to raise men of talent to positions above themselves," unwilling even "to look for a small number of capable people to receive advanced training and become theological thinkers for the church."

It was only at the beginning of this century that the Chinese church was able to produce its own thinkers and theologians. By this time, there was already a small number of intellectuals who had received higher education and theological training. The challenge of the May Fourth Movement and the Anti-Christian Movement which followed compelled them to seriously reflect upon the questions facing the Chinese church, and this was the beginning of authentic Chinese theological reflection. The most influential thinkers in this first generation of Chinese theologians, and those whom we will discuss in this essay, were: T.C. Chao (1888-1979), Hsieh Fu-ya (b. 1892), Jia Yuming (1879-1964), Y.T.Wu (1893-1979), Hsu Paoch'ien (1892-1944) and Wu Lei-chuan(1870-1940?). All except for the centenarian Hsieh Fu-ya have now gone to be with the Lord, but they were the theological and spiritual pillars of the Chinese church.

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This essay has been slightly adapted and rearranged to make it more accessible to non-Chinese readers.

The generation of Chinese theologians which emerged in the first part of the twentieth century were without exception nurtured in traditional Chinese culture. This was not only expressed by their proficiency in literary Chinese, but more importantly, in their thinking and in their character. It was precisely for this reason that all of them found themselves caught between the conflicting demands of "loyalty" and "filiality," loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ versus filiality with respect to the Chinese cultural tradition. This conflict gave rise to a dilemma and perplexity in their spirituality and ethics which T.C. Chao captured in the following words:

Those of us who believe in Jesus Christ are today tasting hardship, for our faith has been shaken to the foundations. ... For many of us, it is as if we have come out of a cave in the clouds, and can never return; or, like the water in the high mountains, we can never be part of the pure streams of the valley. ... What do we have to preach to the China of today? And if we know, do we have the strength to preach it?

Not all Christian intellectuals took up the challenge of the May Fourth and Anti-Christian movements, and it is true that there were those like Zhang Yijing who attacked from all sides. But the majority adopted a more sober and reflective posture. T.C.Chao proposed that "the Chinese church take advantage of the times and get onto the right path in order to make a positive contribution." He also stressed the continuing importance of Christian devotion and active work for independence. Hsu Pao- ch'ien believed that,

The Anti-Christian Movement was good for the church ... there are good reasons to be opposed (to Christianity as it now exists), but this does not negate the truth of Christianity ... we should respond to this movement by doing the best we can to cultivate the spiritual life, join in the movement to oppose the unequal treaties, strive for self-support and self-propagation in the Chinese church, adopt an open-minded attitude towards those opposed to Christianity, and work towards the transformation of society.

Writing in 1948, Y.T.Wu observed, "We now believe that there was something good in the criticisms (of the Anti-Christian Movement), for their sharp warning developed in us a sense of dissatisfaction and a consciousness of the need to reform." It can be seen that Y.T.Wu's desire to reform the Chinese church was taking shape as early as the 1920s. The Three-Self Movement after 1949 was the necessary continuation and extension.

As servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, we know that there are very few people who, like Paul, receive a direct revelation from above. The majority are those who "know by learning" rather than "know by nature". Since they "know by learning," their theological origins depend upon following a teacher, and in the China of the 1920s, following a teacher from whatever western school of theology was never something determined solely by individual decision. One basic reason behind the different perspectives of the first generation of Chinese theologians was that they followed different schools of western theology, and we have no right to be over-critical of this generation because of this. Their theologies were different, the angles from which they investigated problems were different, the level of their contact with the West was different, and their strengths and weaknesses were also different. But set against the backdrop of Chinese theology as a whole, all of these differences can help us to see the radiance and splendor of all the stars in the galaxy of theology from a variety of positions.

Theological reflection in the Chinese church has basically emerged during three important periods. The first was the period around the May Fourth Movement, cut short by the times of war and confusion which followed. During this period, theological reflection was concerned with the conflict and harmony between Christianity and Chinese culture, and with the questions posed by the New Culture Movement; for example, the question of whether Christianity was able to contribute to spiritual construction and character formation in Chinese society, and whether Christianity could save human beings and benefit the world.

The second period began around 1956. This was a time of "theological reorientation" involving the masses, but it was cut short by the political movements of the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution. "Theological reorientation" was concerned with questions about how the church could exist in socialist China, how, in the early years of socialist reconstruction, Christians could commit themselves to the new society; and how the church and individual Christians could assume their moral responsibility for society.

The third period emerged after the end of the Cultural Revolution, after the Chinese church and the Chinese people had gone through a time of turmoil and testing together. The theological reflection which has now emerged is potentially much deeper than that in previous years, for it has been raised from the level of epistemology to the level of ontology. This is indeed the time which T.C. Chao, writing forty years ago in 1950, had predicted would come:

Theology requires thinkers who are closely connected with the church, who are helped by the grace of God and who turn their work out with painstaking care. The Clements, Origen, Tertullians and Augustines of China will be forged from the suffering of the Chinese church...

Forty years from now, the Chinese church will have a reduced sphere of activity, but it will emerge with a deepened experience which will act as a leaven, drawing many people before the cross of Jesus Christ. We will then also see people come to religion seeking a standard of truth, a moral foundation, a safeguard for values, a certainty of self, a meaning of life and a spiritual resting place.

We cannot say that theologians comparable to Clement have already appeared in the Chinese church. But from the experience of suffering, our church has indeed come to a deeper understanding of Christian faith which has given many people outside the church something that they could not have received elsewhere.

Chinese theological reflection can be divided into three chronological periods, and there are both continuities and discontinuities. We can trace the pattern of a theology with Chinese characteristics linking each period to the others, but more importantly, we can discover running through this pattern the guidance, protection, love and grace which God has continually granted to the Chinese church in the course of its seventy year pilgrimage.

The first special feature of theology in the Chinese church is the unity of faith, knowledge and action. As Jia Yuming pointed out in 1921:

The study of theology grounds our faith in knowledge, so that we can develop a clear and reasonable faith as we seek God's way. What I believe is what I know; and what I know is what I believe; what I know and believe can be seen in what I put into practice; and when I have experienced what I practice, then I know what I believe and act on what I know.

This observation is not unique to the conservative-evangelical Jia Yuming. Hsieh Fu-ya came to a similar conclusion on the basis of his religious philosophy:

For the Chinese people, religion can be reduced to religious experience, for unlike Israel or India which are nations of "faith," and westerners who come from nations of "knowledge," China is a nation of "action."

Hsieh Fu-ya believed that "Chinese philosophy is in general a theory of empiricism, and the theology which will be produced by Chinese Christians will most likely be an 'empirical theology' which it would be difficult to term a 'revealed theology'." On this basis, he concluded: "For 1800 years, the West has used a method of 'faith proved by knowledge' to produce a resplendent Christian theology; similarly, our 'faith proved by action' can provide a magnificent vantage point for a Chinese Christian civilization." Hsieh's "empirical theology" and what Jia Yuming termed his "experimental theology" complement one another.

Related to the question of the unity between faith and action is the relationship between "inner formation" and "external expression" which Chinese people see as part of a larger indivisible whole. All things with an "inner formation" and an "internal form" must necessarily have an "external expression," which is to say they must be revealed in one's external behavior and concrete actions. To put it the other way around, the "external expression" of all things can be traced to their "inner formation," the conscience and heart of their "internal form." Whatever good actions there are apart from this are pretentious, pharisaical and hypocritical. This characteristically Chinese way of seeing things is reflected in Chinese theology. Jia Yuming spoke of it in terms of the search for internal exercises and moral holiness:

One characteristic of Christianity is the special attention placed on internal exercises for the spirit ... that is, devotion to the rebirth of the inner spirit. How can the "inner human being," the spiritual "man" make progress in the cultivation of moral life? His moral truth must find outward expression, it must be visible in an external form, or else he is not a true Christian. Putting into practice the internal exercises of the spirit is one of the superior features of our Christian faith.

True Christian morality ... is a sacred morality that has a deepened sense of spiritual truth full of the fragrance of Christ.

While Jia Yuming emphasizes the priority of "inner formation" over "external expression," Hsu Pao-ch'ien was more interested in the question of the relationship between "unity between thought and action." In Chinese philosophy, the question of whether there is "first knowledge, then action" or "first action, then knowledge" has been an ongoing debate. But throughout Chinese philosophy, the "unity between thought and action" or "unity between action and thought" is generally agreed. Hsu Pao-ch'ien was deeply influenced by the neo-Confucianism of Wang Yangming, and this philosophical context is reflected in his understanding of Christ. "The most excellent point about Jesus," Hsu observed, "is that he was able bring mystical experience and moral life together into one unity." It was in this connection that Hsu explored the "ethical foundation for service" which he saw as "knowing Jesus and following his example."

Similarly, for Hsieh Fu-ya in his later years, the question was ho Christianity's "mysteries" and "service" could be mutually expressed The experience and source of religious mystery or mysticism can tat many forms, but in Hsieh Fu-ya's understanding, "they all return the utter joy of the unity between the self and the transcendent During his time as a young student in America, Hsieh had a mystic experience at Niagara Falls which changed his whole life. It produce in him "the sense of excitement that all under heaven was his responsibility." Hsieh Fu-ya therefore came to believe that "all religions, are especially Christianity, must have their inner-directed mysteries s well as their outer-directed social service."

The two represent a unity between inner and outer. The more profound the mystery, the more intense will be its active expression in service. Likewise, as the service becomes more lofty and extensive, the mystery will become more highly refined ... the so-called soul is really an individual's spiritual power which can be cultivated so as to be in communion with or even at one with the cosmos. In this way, the individual achieves an unbounded support and a foundation whit enables him to become in every sense a hero who is able to go through fire and water, and who is willing to do anything in this mortal world in order to work for the salvation of the common people.

Hsieh Fu-ya expounds his view of "world renunciation" based on this understanding:

When the soul and the cosmos breathe together, all things in this world are completely forgotten. Fame, fortune an power are no longer mine. This is what is termed "world renunciation" in religious philosophy. But world renunciation is not an empty and negative thing, for it also involves an active willingness to jump into the bitter sea in order I save those who are lost there.

Although theologically they are quite far apart, it is surprising that Jia Yuming comes to a similar conclusion about "world renunciation" by different means. Writing in 1921, the young Jia Yumin expressed his perspective in this way:

Christianity is a religion of transcendence and immanence of immanence and transcendence. So it is said, there is day-to-day closeness between heaven and humankind, which allows us to speak of social service, world transformation, and the beautiful purpose inherent in all relief efforts; but this closeness does not mean that

Christianity becomes confused with our sinful world and corrupt society, for it remains detached, high and far off, in the world but also transcendent of it. ... Christianity could never save the world unless it were transcendent.

This was precisely what Hsieh Fu-ya spoke of as the "Metiorism" or "transcendence" which could never become secularity.

Y.T. Wu also had a mystical experience when he accepted Christ as his Lord one night in the spring of 1917:

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel struck me like a bolt of lightening and woke me from a dream. I opened my eyes and beheld the image of a tall and great person: solemn, gentle and with a piercing look - he took hold of my soul, and it was as if he stopped me from breathing. After I returned to my rooms, I was happy, joyful and moved to tears, and I could not but say to this figure I beheld, "Lord, you are my savior!"

This mystical experience changed the course of Y.T. Wu's life, for he derived a great sense of moral force from giving himself to Jesus. In his life of prayer, Y.T. Wu expresses a relationship similar to that between internal exercises and sacred morality which Jia Yuming spoke of. For Y.T. Wu, "the primary meaning of prayer is not prayer itself, but the silent recognition of truth. The purpose of prayer is not to make objective facts of experience bow down before our subjective desires, nor is it to call on God to agree to whatever we may ask for.... No, prayer calls us to discover the way forward on the basis of the truth we have been given to understand." Prayer, therefore, is listening to God's voice and accepting God's mission for us:

Prayer at its best makes people feel that the voice which they hear is God's voice. Jesus felt this way, and so did Paul and all the prophets and saints. Prayer gave them great wisdom, human-heartedness and courage. It was in prayer that they accepted the great mission that God entrusted unto them. This mission became the center of their lives, and something which they would live and die for.

This kind of prayer experience was at the same time an experience of "liberation from self." For Y.T.Wu, "liberation from self" meant "a change from self-centeredness to truth - centeredness or God-centeredness, the surrender and giving of the self to God, the attentive listening to God's voice, the obeying of God's commands, allowing God to fully become the Lord of ourselves." The result of this is "spiritual independence and freedom. Mencius said: '...To be above the power of riches and honors to make dissipated, of poverty and mean conditions to make swerve from principle, and of power to force and make bend ... This character constitutes the great man.'(III..2.2.3) ... Paul said, 'I can be satisfied in any situation'...They both achieved a 'liberation from self' in their spiritual lives."

Y.T. Wu was a thinker who stressed history. According to K.H. Ting, "He picked up from the floor of human history what had been looked down upon in traditional Christianity, and viewed it from the perspective of the people, thereby changing its original face and

discovering the Christian mission, as well as people along the same road who would fulfill the mission, within it. This was the point where Y.T.Wu's theory and practice differed from that of other theological thinkers." But it should be remembered that it was a life of prayer which enabled Wu to devote himself to making the eternal truth of Christ "a force for human liberation and the advance of history."

We have been speaking of the unity between faith or knowledge and action in different ways, as a unity between internal exercises and sacred morality, between mysticism and service, between transcendence and involvement in the secular world, between prayer and mission, between surrender to God and the liberation of the self, between history and eternity. All of these are related to the aesthetic temperament and philosophical thought of the Chinese people. The contemporary scholar Zong Baihua has written:

Chinese people can see the infinite within finite, and from the infinite, they return to the finite. Their interest is not in pressing forward so as never to return, but in circling around and coming back.

Yu Yingshi of Princeton University has expressed a similar idea:

From the very beginning, Chinese have known that human intelligence is unable to clearly and concretely express the transcendent source of (human) values. But it is even more important that the Chinese have not drawn an unbridgable gap between these two realms. In Chinese understanding, there is mutual interference between the two realms; when they drift apart, they come together, and when together, they drift apart. Thus, if we represent the ideal of the transcendent realm as *Dao* and everyday human relations as the practical reality of the earthly realm, then we can say that Dan is within 'everyday human relations,' and 'everyday human relations' cannot escape from *Dao* even for one moment.

The Anti-Japanese War and the deleterious social conditions of the post-war period were disastrous for the Chinese people, and they engendered a general sense of spiritual decline and moral decay. The historical and social distortions of this period also gave rise to distorted and twisted theologies. Spirituality and morality became separated. Faith and ethics, religious life and practical life, eternity and history, the soul and matter, church and world, Christians and non-Christians were all torn apart. For many Christians, the sacred and the secular were pitted against each other like fire and water, so that they could no longer co-exist. This kind of theological viewpoint proved to be especially inappropriate after 1949, for it was not in tune with the moral force of the new order. Christian theology became a spiritual shackle for the masses of believers trying to live in the new society, for it seemed to force them, particularly the young people, to choose between the demands of their faith and their love for the new order.

The only way forward for the church was to return to the Bible in the search for new light and a new message, so as to discover what God was saying in the new situation. Like an arrow on the string of a bow, a mass-based "theological reorientation" was ready to come forth. It is true that the Christians who initiated this theological debate came mainly from the leadership level

"on the front line," but they were theologically competent church workers who helped resolve the contradictions we have been speaking of. From the large number of essays written in the mid-1950s, the main points in the debate may be summarized in the following quotations:

1. Spirituality is holiness. "Only a holy church, with holy preachers (or believers), can be called a spirit-filled church." Spirituality is love: "A spiritual church (or individual) must have love." Spirituality is selfless: "True spirituality is selfless ... only a completely selfless Christian can be in the power of the Holy Spirit and can allow the Holy Spirit to determine all things, and only such a person can be said to be spiritual." (Han Bide, of Nanjing Theological Seminary, writing in 1955)

2. Spirituality has nothing to do with externals. "The basic question is whether the inner spirit can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. If there are no fruits of the Holy Spirit, then one cannot be said to be spiritual." (Li Rongfang, writing in 1955)

3. "People can attain a spiritual meaning from their practical life; in the world ... all of life has a spiritual meaning.... Authentic religious meaning must be discovered through real life, because it is only in life practice that one can become truly clear about spiritual meaning.. Christianity is at its lowest when religious life and everyday life are seen as two separate things ... it is in everyday life that Christian character is built, that spiritual life is formed and eternal values are accumulated.... In order to know the state of an individual's inner life it is necessary to see its concrete expression in practical life." (Cher Shuqian, writing in 1957)

4. Although it was "because of one man's disobedience that the many were made sinners," the humanity which was created in the image of God was not completely lost as a result ... goodness and righteousness in the human heart come from God. We should not therefore, reproach or dismiss acts of goodness and righteousness (by non-Christians)." (Xu Rulei, writing in 1954)

5. "There is only a short span of human life. ... But the shortness of life should not become an excuse for passively rejecting the work or writing off human values. ... Life has meaning and value because human beings are able to become co-workers with God." (Xu Rulei writing in 1954)

6. "Jesus was fully God and fully human. The `flesh' was the natural man, created in God's image, for which our Lord Jesus Christ paid a heavy price to redeem. ... All emotional and rational human activity is good in and of itself, providing that: it does not become an instrument of sin; and it is offered to God as an instrument of righteousness, and thereby sanctified." (Huang Peiyong [1917-1962] writing in 1954)

7. "The world which God loves is not the same as `the world which Christians should not love, and the world which Christians should not love is not the same as `the world' which God loves ... God so loved the world that He redeemed with Jesus' blood all which had been lost by Adam's sin." (Sun Pengxi [1899- 1987 ], writing in 1956)

8. "Jesus works on two levels, and while of course he stresses the saving of souls, he also reaches out both hands to serve the people. Human life must be a life with the people; Christians cannot be divorced from the people, but must do their utmost at the positions they assume in society." (Jia Yuming, writing in 1956)

9. "To 'dedicate oneself to the sacred' does not mean that we should have no dealings with non-Christians. The important thing is our understanding of the word 'sacred,' for it means that Christians, as distinct from non-Christians, are called to lead holy and upright lives." (Humng Peiyong, writing in 1955)

10. "There are differences between Christians and non-Christians, but there should be no lack of mutual understanding ... although Christians and non-Christians have different faiths, non-Christians can still be our friends, our brothers and our sisters, and they do not have to become our enemies. There should be no unbridgable gap which separates Christians from non-Christians." (Tang Matai [1907-1981], 11, writing in 1956)

The extracts quoted above were all selected from *Seeing the Light within the Light*, a volume published in 1988. They are all concerned with theological questions about relationships between faith and action, internal piety and external expression, spirituality and reality, the church and those outside, belief and non-belief, eternity and human life, salvation and service, the sacred and identification with the world. All of these questions were similar to those addressed by the first generation of Chinese theologians. But as these questions again came to be dealt with again in the 1950s, the emphasis was different from what it had been before.

We can say that in the category of "moral instrument" (*daoqi*), 'instrumentality' was stressed, and in the category of "moral power" (*daode*), "power" was stressed. In other words, in the 1950s, emphasis was placed on the real, the practical, the concrete, the substructure. This was because the Chinese people were themselves stressing the practical, the effective, the useful, and the pragmatic. This new emphasis served as a corrective for the distorted and twisted theology of the late 1940s. The unfortunate thing is that this "theological reorientation" was not able to develop more deeply and fully, for the "leftist" line which emerged in the late 1950s had already dismissed this reorientation as a form of "socialist religion." The "theological reorientation" of the mid-1950s was abruptly brought to a close at the epistemological level.

After the disastrous times of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese church was again faced with the memory of a distorted and twisted society, and once again, distorted and twisted theological viewpoints emerged as a specter which could not be easily dispelled. For this reason, the Chinese church once again had to deal with the same set of theological questions which the first and second generations of Chinese theologians had already addressed. The difference was that this third attempt is being treated on a much higher Christological level, that is, on the level of Christ's incarnation.

According to Liu Qingfen from Tianjin,

Jesus, our incarnate Lord, was fully God and fully human, and insofar as he was fully human, he was perfect and without defect ... his perfect character meant that he was humble

and gentle, that he loved justice and hated sin, that he distinguished clearly between love and hate, but that he was also merciful and compassionate beyond compare. (1981)

Sister Jiang Peifen of Nanjing has also stressed the incarnation:

The incarnation means that in God's eyes, human beings are most precious ... the incarnation means that God's Word is joined together with flesh and blood in the material body ... the Word must find expression in the living of our life. Spirit and body, life and its living, faith and action cannot be separated, but must be united ... the incarnation means that God and humankind, spirit and body, heaven and earth history and eternity are somehow joined together. (1982)

Bishop K.H. Ting relates the incarnation to the importance of material life:

The truth of the incarnation is not only revealed in God's great love in coming into this world, taking on our sufferings and finally completing his redemptive work on the cross; this truth also teaches us how we should regard the body and material life. Since the Word came into the world materially and in the flesh, the flesh and material life are not to be despised; they are precious, and can become, indeed ought to become, the means for the manifestation of holy love. We believe that God's love and concern for humankind is holistic, and that bodily life, material life, intellectual development, society, politics, ethics and morals are not outside of God's love and concern. (1983)

Coming from a very different tradition, the conservative-evangelical Bi Yongqin emphasizes the importance of incarnation for reconciliation:

The great achievement of the incarnation is that God freely chose to become a human being, that God himself took over the burden of human sin through his suffering on the cross, that God shed His own blood for us, thus opening the curtain of the holy of holies which is rent into two from top to bottom, and removing the obstacles which had separated God from humankind; in this way, reconciling God and man. (1983)

Bishop Shen Yifan speaks of the incarnation as sacredizing secular life:

That the incarnate Christ took part in ordinary secular life is in no way demeaning to God's Word, rather, it sanctifies life in this world and reveals God's glory. In the mind of Christ, all secular things can be done to the glory of God, and they are all "sacred." In contrast, all "sacred" acts performed for selfish reasons become secular. (1988)

And I myself addressed the same subject in 1985:

In the beginning there was the Word of life, which could be seen and touched by human beings, and the brothers and sisters whom the Son of Man sought to save were also of mortal flesh and blood... Christians share with Christ a heavenly life in God which must be made manifest here on earth in our life in the world.

These extracts show how the Chinese church has attempted to draw on the incarnation of Jesus Christ to address the same problem faced by the first generation of Chinese theologians. The incarnation describes a process through which the Son of God became the Son of Man. On an ontological level, the incarnation resolves the contradictions between God and humankind, Word and flesh, eternity and history, the infinite and the finite, the absolute and the relative, life and its living, faith and action, spirit and body, heaven and earth, the sacred and the secular, the heavenly life in God and life in this world. It is in the incarnation that they are unified and can exist together.

### 3

The second special feature of theological reflection in the Chinese church is what Hsieh Fu-ya has called the "the direct investigation of Christ," a Christ-centeredness which shattered the framework of the western theology which had been brought to China. Wu Lei-chuan once proposed putting together a simple "biographical account of Jesus" according to materials from the four Gospels and compiling "an outline of Jesus' teachings," again according to what Jesus had said and done, in order to explain "why Jesus was the Christ"; these works would then become "the basis for (new) research on Christianity". Hsieh Fu-ya proposed something similar when he spoke of the "direct investigation of Christ." The humanism of the Chinese tradition, according to Hsieh, "puts human beings in the center of things; for thousands of years of Chinese history, 'human affairs' have been at the center. This is unlike western history where (the progress of) achievements has been preferred." Because of this,

We should proceed in faith according to the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ when he was in this world, for it is better to "preach about a man" than to "preach about a way"... just before he left this world, Jesus spoke the two words, "Follow me," and thus pronounced his most solemn teaching... We should directly investigate Jesus himself, rather than elaborate creeds, develop church doctrines and mechanically proclaim words and texts from the Bible ... The noble character of Jesus can be observed throughout his life and in his death, the former in the incarnation and the latter, through his death on the cross.

Hsieh Fu-ya went on to say: "China's own systematic theology need not follow the order of the West ... we should begin with Jesus Christ, and then go on to God the Father who revealed Christ to us." If we return to the older generation of Chinese theologians, we will see that even though their perspectives, positions and ways in which they understood and accepted this "Son of Man" were different, they all put Christ at the center. The early T.C. Chao affirmed: "Christ's life and an attitude of identification with Christ is the essence of Christianity." When he wrote these words, there was in the Chinese church a struggle between proponents of the "individual gospel" and the "social gospel." But already in his first published essay, T.C. Chao pointed out that "individual salvation and the redemption of society are closely linked." During his prison life, which he later spoke of as a time of purifying and deepening faith, T.C. Chao "silently pondered why the death of Jesus Christ became his way of saving humankind." After returning to the Bible, he concluded that Christianity's "particular contribution to humankind is Christ himself and Christ's own particular religious experience."

Y.T. Wu received Christ as his Lord and Savior, and this savior was now in charge: "He captured me, and I could not escape," wrote Wu of his conversion.

Hsu Pao-ch'ien's conversion to Christianity was not due to his acceptance of any theology or creed, but to the person of Jesus, his holiness, his selfless spirit and his love. But Hsu Pao-ch'ien was not a neo-Confucianist, and he did not stop at the level of Jesus' personality.

Wang Yangming and Jesus were different in one important respect, and that is on the question of self-power and other-power... Because the people of this world are all sinners, salvation must come from a transcendent power beyond humankind. Human beings cannot save themselves, anymore than they can lift up their own bodies.

Wu Lei-chuan had something similar in mind when he said: "Jesus' personality was sufficient to save individuals and to save the world. His teaching is both an individual gospel and a social gospel."

Jia Yuming's fundamentalist theological perspective is even more centered on God's saving work in Jesus Christ, a function of which is the "reality of saving grace" among Christians. Jia believed: the one and only basis for salvation is in "the life history of Jesus Christ, so that Christ means salvation and salvation means Christ.

Christianity means the life, work and history of Jesus Christ himself. But Jia Yuming was not a proponent of an absolute "individual gospel" either, because for him, the scope of salvation was quite large larger even than that of the so-called "social gospel."

Christian salvation is not only for the individual, but for the renewal of the whole of creation, for the redemption of the world ... all creation was damaged by Adam's Fall, but it can be recovered through Christ's saving grace. Grace is concerned with all things in heaven and on earth, and it foreshadows the unity of the entire cosmos, so that heaven and earth will take on an entirely new look.

We are not saying that Chinese theology does not speak about God, but that particular emphasis is always placed on the God who is revealed by Christ. For example, Y.T. Wu's book, *No One Has Ever Seen God*, was first published in 1943. The title of this book caused great many misunderstandings, but all the author was saying was "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (Jn. 1:18).

Similarly, Bishop K.H. Ting has said:

Our Christology does not revolve around the question of the nature of Christ as God and "Man," but leads us to an understanding of the Christ-like personality of God. If Christ, we know that God is not a brutal overseer, but rather as Hosea tells us, God is like one who leads us with cords of human kindness, and easing our yoke, God bends down to us to feed us. The basic attribute of God ... is his love (1984)

It is also not true to say that Chinese theology neglects the Holy Spirit, but again, particular emphasis is placed on the "spirit of Christ." According to T.C. Chao, we should speak of the Spirit who "penetrate the deepest recesses of my heart, teaching me to follow the Jesus to whom I cannot but yield..."(1931) I have spoken of this as "the Hol<sup>y</sup> Spirit which, like the blade of an ax, separates the spirit from the muscles and bones ... so that my soul is laid bare in the light of Chris and can be molded in His image." (1982) And, by way of summary again quoting Bishop Ting, "From probing God's creation and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the church, in the world and in history Chinese Christians have grounded their thinking on a much more solid Christological foundation." (1984)

The word "Christology" can be translated into Chinese either as the "theory of Christ" (*jidulun*) or the "study of Christ" (*jiduxue*). With the Chinese cultural tradition as his starting point, Hsieh Fu-ya came to prefer the latter translation, for it suggested studying and putting into practice what we can learn from the life of Christ:

There is only one Holy Spirit, but it has given different gifts to different cultures and people. The christology produced in the Hellenistic West was a theology or philosophy of Christ; the christology which will soon be produced in China is already forecast to be a painstaking "study" of what we can learn from the life of Christ.

Chinese Christology (*jiduxue*) will not be interested in the debate over creedal formulae or denominational particularities. It will in this way surpass western Catholicism and return to the period of eastern and western Christianity and their various subdivisions. It will also transcend the controversies between so-called fundamentalists and modernists. Our Christology will directly investigate God and "man", and the God-Man Jesus Christ. and will follow the course of his life.

Hsieh Fu-ya did not limit his "direct investigation of Jesus" to modeling oneself according to Jesus' behavior, for this would be too mechanical. He believed instead that "indigenous Chinese theology... prefers the way of realization through mystery to the use of western philosophical methods of inquiry and construction."

Over the last forty years, the Chinese church and Chinese Christians have indeed been following Jesus and modeling themselves after him, and we have learned a great deal in doing so. We have followed and have come to understand the Son of Man as servant and as priest. As servants, we

children of God have placed ourselves in the midst of the people, living out the life of Christ with them, so as to truly serve them. (Jiang Peifen)

Thirty years ago, our love was limited to the few people around us ... but today, it is as if we have lost ourselves in a sea of more than a billion people, seeking the source of the selfless love of Jesus which silently flows on, then gushes forth like a river, before finding on its own land "the shores of Galilee" from which another road leads back to following Jesus and serving the people, without care for food or sleep. (Wang Weifan)

As priests, Chinese Christians have come upon a new truth after the ten disastrous years of the Cultural Revolution:

What a precious lesson to learn that "in all things we should be like our sisters and brothers"! ...The church as priest means the same as it once did in the holy temple. On the one hand, to face our most holy, gracious and jealous God in fear and trembling; and on the other hand, we stand before our compatriots, our brothers and sisters, to worship and pray on their behalf ... in order to carry out this mission and responsibility, we should be like our brothers and sisters in all things, for only then can we deserve to be called priests of God. (Shen Yifan)

Chinese Christians have followed the same road as their people for thirty years, and have shared in their sorrows and joys, their distress and consolation, their difficulties and hopes, their weakness and their strength. They are no longer separate from the people, but are right there in the midst of them, facing God once again, loving their compatriots as their own flesh and blood and feeling for the fate of their nation .... The mission of the high priest is not to alienate God from the people, it is not to bring down God's angry wrath upon them or commit them to his punishment and chastisement; rather, it is to enable people to receive God's grace and enjoy him, to bring peace and healing to the people as he or she takes on their wounds and their pain.(Wang Weifan)

Hsieh Fu-ya had hoped for "the indigenization of Chinese Christianity" which is also reflected in the experience of the Chinese church:

The indigenization of Christianity in China will not be like that of the Tang dynasty Nestorians ... and it will certainly not mean turning Jesus into a Chinese sage. It will mean that real live Chinese people, Chinese who are immersed in their own cultural tradition, learn what it means to become disciples of Jesus Christ, Chinese disciples, not foreign Christians formed in a western image ... I dare to say that if Christianity is really to have a future in China, it must first cultivate a group of indigenized Christians with a spirit like that of the Chinese.

The Chinese church has undergone a long and deep process of reflection on the question of ecclesiology, brought on by the tremendous changes which have taken place in our history. This reflection has begun with an understanding of the church as the body of Christ. In this respect, ecclesiology has become an extension of christology. Therefore, the Chinese church has stressed the "religious essence" of the church, which is to say the church as "body." T.C. Chao thought that an "indigenized church" or a "sinicized Christianity" needed to acknowledge "that although the layer upon layer of western church rituals, doctrines, organizations, and architecture hidden within Christianity have made it almost impossible to recognize its true face, there is also a religious essence in Christianity which can never be obliterated."

The question of ecclesiology is first of all a question of the relationship between "essence" (*ti*) and "utility" (*yung*). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, T.C. Chao keenly felt that the Chinese church had for far too long stressed practicality over substance in the life of the church, producing a "utility without essence":

Although it can neither be seen nor touched, the church has an essence, with a form, a shape and an unchanging foundation in Jesus Christ, which is concentrated in the fellowship of Christians. Were the church only a form, a social phenomenon or human organization, then it would be like the YMCA or the Red Cross... If the church were like this, then it could not be called a church for it would not be the body of Christ, and God could not dwell in a holy temple constructed with human hands...

The essence of the church is Jesus Christ, the eternal son of God, and in this way, the church differs from all other human groups and organizations. Essence includes two things: form, meaning the form in which believers are joined together; and body, meaning the real presence of the eternal Christ ...Chinese people do not understand that the essence of a form is not exhausted by the thing in itself, and therefore they see the church as an organization created by men and women and nothing more. They do not understand what the church really is. (1946)

After 1949, the Chinese church gave up all its educational, medical and welfare institutions. Writing in 1984, Bishop K.H.Ting termed this a "great release."

Today we discover that with a greatly reduced sphere of activity, the Chinese church can complete its fourfold mission calling of worshipping, pastoring, showing concern for the people and witnessing. In one respect the church has lost its power, but precisely because of this, the preaching of the gospel is even better than before ... the fact of the matter is that when the church is weak and in difficulty, the gospel of Jesus Christ is revealed with even greater force.

A second aspect of the ecclesiological question is that of the "eternal" and the "historical" character of the church, that is, "the holiness of the church and the possibility of its corruption." In the early 1950s, there was in the Chinese church a debate over a book which was entitled *Holy and Without Blemish*. The church eternal is holy and without blemish, but the historical church can have "a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind." Christ, therefore, will always have to be "cleansing the church with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor ... yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27). The church eternal is like "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). But in the course of history, the church must continually be cleansed and made holy; this cleansing is the process of self-reform which is always at work in the history of the church.

A third question for ecclesiology is that of "the one and the many," the question of "the body and the limbs" of the church. As early as 1921, Jia Yuming predicted:

Chinese people have the view that all religions are alike, that although Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism have different teachings, they can somehow be harmonized and brought together. This kind of harmonization also is related to future prospects of the Christian church in China ... someday our Lord's sheep will all come together into one fold, and China itself will be the harbinger of the unity of the Chinese Christian church.

The unification of worship services began in the 1950s, and the Chinese church entered the "post-denominational era," thus fulfilling the prophecy and hope of the older generation of Chinese theologians. But this unification or unity is not uniformity. As Hsieh Fu-ya said:

Western Christianity has been influenced by the exclusiveness of western culture, and this has resulted in the internal divisions among different churches and denominations. Chinese Confucianism has believed in "the great unity" (*datong*), which is not the same as unity or uniformity in the western sense. In China, "the great unity" goes together with "small differences". We do not wipe away the "differences" because they are "small," and we do not swallow up everything because the "unity" is "great."

This is quite similar to "building up the fellowship in love" which T.C. Chao had proposed as the slogan and prayer for reform in the Chinese church, functioning in a way similar to that of Martin Luther's "salvation by faith alone" in the Reformation. Both Hsieh and Chao were theological forerunners to the "post-denominational period" which the Chinese church entered in 1958.

A fourth question for ecclesiology concerns the relationship between "universality and particularity" or "ecumenicity and national character." Bishop K.H. Ting has done more reflection on this aspect of ecclesiology than anyone else. The question is occasioned by the re-entry of an independent Chinese church into the ecumenical arena in the 1980s:

It can be said that any local or national church has two poles, its universality and its particularity. We need to conscientize ourselves to both ... The fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ is something only to be fathomed and made complete by Christians of all cultural backgrounds ...The universality of the church only exists in all the particularities of the local churches. The local church is the place where the meeting between Christian universalism and cultural particularities occurs to maximum advantage ...

Catholicity in its breadth embraces the churches in all parts of the geographical world. Catholicity in its depth brings it the fruits of the encounters of Christian faith with all cultures These two dimensions of catholicity are still something in the process of realization. (1984)

Or again,

The relatedness of the local church to the Church universal surely has much to do with the making of its selfhood. But the concept of locality is an important part of the New Testament understanding of the Church. Locality, nationality and particularity are not accidental but are the essential marks of the universal Church. (1982)

Finally, ecclesiology is concerned with the "life and death" of "death and rebirth" of the church. The Chinese church has undergone a death and resurrection experience similar to that described in the New Testament, "it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown

in weakness, it is raised in power" (I Cor. 15:43). This is a truth which Chinese Christians have discovered in the twists and turns of their history. As Bishop Ting said in his sermon, "It is the Lord,"

Out of death, there comes new life, out of suffering, there is joy, and out of weakness, strength. This is not only the experience of Jesus Christ, but we increasingly find that it is our own experience as well. As Christians and as a church, we have come to believe more deeply in the resurrection over the course of the last thirty years.(1985) To sum up what has been said thus far, the doctrines of God and the Holy Spirit, as well as ecclesiology, have developed from the Christological concerns of the Chinese church. We would prefer to say that this special feature of Chinese theology owes more to the Chinese cultural tradition than it does to any specifically theological factor.

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Rev. Chen Zemin, vice-principal of Nanjing Theological Seminary, preached a sermon in 1984 which was entitled, "Faith Leads Us Forward." There he said,

We see more and more clearly the mission we bear and the task God has entrusted to us. Our faith is not backward looking and is not excessively concerned with splitting doctrinal hairs because that can only sow discord and distrust. We should look forward in faith. In the last thirty years, we have already cast off the burden of denominationalism which encumbered us in the past and the burden of dogmatism. We have realized that we must share weal and woe together with our motherland and its people. This is the most important condition for bearing witness to the gospel in China.

In our theological thinking, we have begun to apply the principle of mutual respect, and overcome past divergences such as the so-called old and new cliques of fundamentalism and modernism, and take a new path suitable to our church and the spiritual needs of Chinese Christians. This path can both sustain and carry on the vitality of Christianity as well as suit the conditions of our modern society. It is a path for propagating the gospel with Chinese characteristics ...I believe God will use us and is even now using us to complete the mission he has entrusted us in this age.

This is an apt summary of what we have been saying in this essay.

A similar idea is expressed in our new understanding of ministry. The Old Testament had speaks of a fourfold office of the messiah: prophet, priest, king and servant. But in the four gospels and in the epistles of the New Testament, we see that the priestly and servant roles of Jesus Christ are stressed. Jesus broke through the Old Testament understanding of the kingly messiah through his suffering and death on the cross.(Jn. 19:19- 20) By giving himself as a sacrifice for the sins of others, he sacrificed his kingly office for a priestly one. Jesus' prophetic office was mainly expressed in his appeals to the Pharisees and Saducees of his

day. But in his words and actions, Jesus also revealed himself as the "servant" of others and, by God's bountiful grace, as a "priest" for humankind.

"For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). This, in the end, is the key for understanding the characteristic feature of theology in the Chinese church over the last seventy years. To put it another way, the word became flesh as a servant and as a priest. This has been the theological center of all our investigations, understanding, and practice in the Chinese church.

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Translated by Philip L. Wickeri.

## On Religion - Yang Zhouhuai\*

Religion is a form of social ideology. Religious believers hold that within and beyond the real world there exists a supernatural, superhuman, divine force (god), which created and rules the natural and human worlds. Therefore, human beings are to revere and worship god, and to pattern their lives according to the will of god.

Religion is the form that belief and practice take. Through belief and practice, people can or hope to relate to and communicate with the god who stands outside their daily experience.

The word religion, in English just as in Latin, is derived from the root *ligare*, which means to bind or restrain. Thus, we may say that religion means that a believer binds him or herself to a deity of his or her own free will. The important concepts here are "freely" and "bind to."

Religion emphasizes acting on a free will basis, which is reflected in the concept of "accepting faith as found in a certain religion." This also involves accepting a form of restraint or bondage. Free acceptance and restraint are contradictory concepts. Acting on the basis of free will reflects freedom, while restraint reflects lack of freedom. Religious faith lives in this paradox.

Under certain historical conditions, religion can be compatible with the larger society, particularly when a religion's practice shares a common foundation with the rest of society. In China, the most important foundation for this compatibility is freedom of religious belief and a commonly held aspiration to strive for the well-being and happiness of our people and the citizens of our nation.

The specific formulation of religious policy should be based on the objective and scientific study of religion, and not on subjective views.

The relationship between religious bodies on the one hand and society and government on the other must be worked at diligently by both sides. Thus, it can be said, religious ideas and activities are produced, developed and limited by certain historical conditions of society. At the same time, they also influence their historical times, the social lives of peoples or nations, political structures, prevailing culture and ethical mores.

Marxist scholars of religion feel that human effort can neither maintain nor destroy religion, and even more firmly doubt that opposing the lawful development of religion can be beneficial to socialist society.

Religious bodies have historically assumed very important functions, have been used by various groups, including ruling classes, have also inspired people to strive and struggle for truth, goodness and beauty. That is to say, they have been used by people, sometimes in bad ways, sometimes in good ways. This is true to the present day.

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Religion seeks truth, goodness and beauty. That is why religion often expresses itself in cultural forms of these qualities. Thus, religion becomes a bearer of culture, and culture enhances religion. Each utilizes the other. The fact that culture has been preserved throughout human history is due to a large extent to religion. The statues and artistic carvings of China, are all products of Buddhism and Daoism. If we were to exclude all the architecture, statues, carvings paintings of Buddhism and Daoism, little of ancient Chinese architecture, carvings, statues, and paintings would be left. This is particularly obvious in statuary. Before, during, and after the Renaissance, Christianity assumed an important, dominant role in painting, sculpture, and architecture. Religious music held the leading place in western classical music. If we were to eliminate the religious from the painting, music, and artistic expression of western culture, little of consequence would be left. Let us consider the great German composer J. S. Bach, (1685-1750) who, though he did compose some secular music (violin and cello sonatas, piano concertos, fugues, etc.) produced many religious musical works. Moreover, the philosophical basis and lofty moral sentiments of his "secular musical works" were all derived from his Lutheran Christian faith. Because of Bach's pious Christian faith, all of his works are permeated by the ethos and spirit of Christianity. The novel *Resurrection* by the great Russian author Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) is not considered a religious work, but it is filled with the faith and moral ethos of Christianity.

Some people feel that the relationship of the artistic expression of a culture and religion is one of religious restrictions upon the arts. There is in fact much in the literature of today which is non-religious. In ancient China or Europe, however, the environment in which art could develop was religious, because only religious groups had the power (including materials as well as human and financial resources) to enable artistic culture to grow and develop. Even among the royalty and nobility of various periods, few used their financial, material, and human resources to invest in the arts. One clear example is the pipe organ. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where, other than the church, were the financial, human, and material resources to be found for the purchase and staffing of a pipe organ? Thus, composition for the pipe organ and the training of organists were all based in the church. Although ordinary people may have been fond of or devoted to the art of organ music, yet their financial, material, and even human resources were so limited that it would have been virtually impossible for them to support its development. Again, aside from religious groups, where else could one find so many people to appreciate the arts? Had church music or temple statuary been kept in the homes of royalty and nobility, they would have become objects of appreciation for the select few. However, in the church or temple, all those attending religious services could hear or see these works of art - many more than in the homes of royalty or nobility. Measuring the development of the arts in times past by today's artistic standards is both ahistorical and subjective.

From an historical perspective, what are the bases for calling something a religion?

Generally speaking, a "religion" must have a theoretical system of religious dogma, or we might say that there must be dogma as well as myth or the miraculous. The theoretical system must accord with logic, must have a philosophical basis, must have a comprehensive system of thought, must have deep convictions and theory about life. But

it there must also be something of myth or the miraculous which surpasses our reality and cannot be understood according to reason. At the same time, there must be perspectives on and explanations of the ultimate meaning of life.

A "religion" must have a clear and well-defined church organization, including a clerical hierarchy (administrators, leaders, priests scholars who are concerned about the development of the theoretical system, prophets, and saints). Structured organization is a necessary condition for religion, and for its development and capacity to be self-adjusting.

A "religion" must have its own order and structure. As religious activities are carried out, there will be definite rites and orders of service. Its system of order need not be identical with the customs and habits of secular society. Its order and structure, rites and orders of service are not immutable however. There is always room for adjustment. The rites provide for worship and meditation, as well as many forms of thought.

Scriptures and creeds are also necessities for religion. These should be of high ethical and moral standards, both personal and social. They will provide explanations of creation, salvation, and so on as the basis of faith.

A "religion" must have its own history, the history of its mission and of its important people. The designated festive days derived from that history give symbolic form to the worship.

Any "religion" must be distinguishable from other religions There will be points of difference in forms, structure, and object of worship, and each religion will have distinctive marks in theory and dogma.

Many people tend to view religion as superstition. Given the factors mentioned above, no religious adherent will accept the viewpoint that "religion is merely superstition." Unfortunately, most people who hold such a viewpoint have given little, if any, study to religion, but have come to the facile conclusion that religion is superstition. Religious believers believe in one form or another of a "super-human divine power." This is how believers refer to transcendent truth, goodness, and beauty. These beliefs are genuine and they try their hardest to realize their ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty in their life and in society. More importantly, in history there have indeed been some people, perhaps even a majority, who have realized these ideals and who, in society or in their own personal lives, have played a very fine, highly moral role. Given this situation, how can anyone say that religion is mere superstition?

Religion and faith are in the main inseparable. Religion is of necessity a faith, although not every form of belief is religion. "Belief in atheism" is a form of belief, but it is not a religion. There are also other philosophical systems which are close to of religion, such as Confucianism in China. However, all religions have their philosophical theory and systems of thought; for instance, Christianity has "systematic theology."

Religion and faith are to be distinguished, as are religion and "theory" with a religious coloration or nature. The Chinese Cultural Revolution took control of political

philosophy - and much of that political philosophy was imperfect, even incorrect - and added an extreme form of personality cult. This personality cult amounted to the deification of a human being, to which were added some religious elements, setting up a "religion," and calling on Chinese people (and hopefully foreigners in the future) to serve and worship this deity. "This brought about some of the greatest tragedies and most unrivaled disasters in human history. The Cultural Revolution illustrates that any "religion" which is a human creation, even when not specifically so termed, brings unprecedented disaster to humanity.

During the course of history, no human religion has been immutable. Changes in the society and environment will effect changes in religion. Some change more quickly, others more slowly. We can for the moment term this a "religion's capability for self-adjustment." Religious adherents may refer to this as "the rediscovery of truth," "a "wakening to truth," or "the discovery of new light." Christians in particular feel that human knowledge of truth will never be complete, and will always be in need of new understanding and revelation. Examples of this can be found in all religions. After Buddhism was brought to China, it also changed through history, changes influenced by particular eras and environments, as well as by major social issues of the day. The Buddhism of China is different from the Buddhism of India, Nepal, or Japan, and different again from that of Tibet. When Christianity was transported to America, differences developed over against the British "mother church." Although the Wesleyan tradition (Methodism) was originally established in England by John Wesley, America established its own Methodist Church. Another example is the more conservative English Anglican system, in which there has always been a struggle about the role of women in the church.

However, the Episcopal Church in the United States recently consecrated its first female bishop. In the Third World nations of Latin America, Africa and Asia, we find that the Christian churches have in recent years bound themselves to the destiny of their country and people, and have joined the struggles for liberation. This has become a very special phenomenon in the history of Christianity.

If we turn to the Roman Catholic Church, we find that it no longer holds, as it once did, a theory that the earth is stationary, but it still objects to birth control. Though it is still unwilling to confront this issue, it is seeking new ways of approaching the problem of the world's rapidly increasing population. The Catholic Church has long considered Marxism to be the number one devil. However, in many countries recently, theologians, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant have already had many dialogues with Marxist scholars in order to seek points of commonality between them. The concern against "compromising with the devil" is gradually diminishing.

All of the above illustrates that in accord with the historical trends toward the scientific progress of human culture, religion also carries out an inner "self-adjustment" and its own "self-adjustment" and it seeks "a Gospel for the times."

The "self-adjustment" of religion is something that has been at work throughout history. It is hard to know how many different denominations there have been over the course of time. Whether or not a religion possesses the power of "self-adjustment" is an important factor in its continued existence and expansion in society. Many denominations and religions have declined, primarily because they lack the power of "self-adjustment" - what believers call "spirit" or life."

"Self-adjustment" is one of the prerequisites for the independent existence of religious bodies, thus it must be visible and must be able to command the believers' faith. There are many factors that bring out, impel or influence this sort of power, among which social and historical changes are the most crucial. How to facilitate "self-adjustment" is a very important concern. Beyond that, this power of "self-adjustment" is not a human product, and cannot be subjectively commanded to perform certain forms of adjustment. Even if these adjustments are well-intentioned or inherently good, that process cannot be commanded, forced, or made to happen in a certain way and people cannot be forced to think or believe in a certain way. The appearance of an "official church" often has its origin in this approach.

To urge or influence a religion to "self-adjust" would not be the best way of attaining "self-adjustment." "Self-adjustment" is a very delicate matter, worthy of intensive study. Urging and influencing cannot be directly related to its appearance or to changes which take place.

It is most important simply to let "self-adjustment" happen, and not to command, force, or direct its course. Should this happen, it would simply have the opposite result, or potential "self-adjustment" might be inhibited.

Throughout the long course of human history religion has consistently been somewhat conservative. As seen from the development of human history, it is not a radical force. That means that the timing of self-adjustment often lags behind the times; this is more related to its mode of understanding than to any innate conservatism, for in its knowledge of truth it is cautious and deliberate. It prefers not to change unless it has achieved complete certainty. This may be one of the special contributions of religion to humanity, because humanity needs both the radical and the cautious or the deliberate, so that it can attain even greater certitude. Humanity cannot simply proceed on the basis of its feelings.

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# Reflections on the Question of Religion Under Socialism - Liang Zhigao\*

Religion is a complex social phenomena which reflects a pattern of social consciousness. In the period of socialism, religion will continue to exist for some time, due to natural, social and epistemological reasons.

A response to the religious question during the primary stage of socialism can be based on Marxist-Leninist principles concerning religion and on the Proposals for the Development of Productive Forces set out at the Thirteenth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. The emphasis on stability and unity implied by these principles raises concrete questions about the present situation religion.

## 1. The Relationship between Religion and a Mixed Economy

China is a socialist society, and we must adhere to the socialist road. However, this socialism is only in its primary stage. The report from the Thirteenth Communist Party Congress points out: "China has already undergone a reform of its economic system, including the development of a mixed economy based on central planning. This has permitted the emergence and growth of a private sector, a decision which was based on the concrete conditions of productive forces in the primary stage of socialism." When we analyze a question, we cannot neglect this reality or stray from the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics determined by our unique conditions. This general direction and its attendant policies provide our foundation.

Because the reality of productive forces has necessitated the emergence of a mixed economy, people's thinking also exists on a number of different levels.

Being determines consciousness. The conditions of a mixed economy inescapably create concepts of privacy in the minds of small producers who are influenced by diverse currents of thought and knowledge. Under the more open policies governing free competition, managers make decisions concerning skills, contracts, rents and management based not only on general policies, but also on their own technical abilities, insights, prestige and attitudes toward public service. In so doing, they assume certain risks, and find themselves influenced by external factors beyond their control which produce unforeseen consequences and threaten their psychological equilibrium. These people and their families consider profit and loss, success and failure, not to be based on concrete conditions or experiences, but to be the result of "luck". Thus, they appeal to a power beyond humanity, seek the blessings of their ancestors or spirits, burn incense in temples, and consult fortune tellers who take advantage of their superstitions. It would be regarded as natural by many to carry out a campaign which would force these people to question such behavior. In a mixed economy, the circumstances of each individual and the relation between individuals and events are dissimilar. This state of affairs can

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influence the individual's moods and consciousness. Those who are successful will be happy; those who are unsuccessful will be sad. Emotions such as envy, hate, love, and jealousy are the products of an individual's changing circumstances, and all contribute to ideas such as "good luck," "destiny" and "providence." These ideas are the products of a religious consciousness, and demonstrate that that consciousness has not been transformed by the present stage of economic development. Concerning the persistence of these ideas in a mixed economy, we should, for the benefit of the people, intensify our educational work, and strengthen socialist democracy and the legal system. In this way, we can reinforce the relationship between the Four Cardinal Principles and the development of reform in the minds of the people.

In order to understand the religious consciousness of people today, we should begin with the objective conditions. Consciousness is based on, and subtly influenced by, changes and developments in the objective world. To have a religious consciousness is not the same as to have religious belief. This kind of consciousness is characterized by individualism and a concern for personal profit. It is not just to request salvation from a "spirit", or a belief in an unknowable "other shore" or "heaven" in the future. Because of this, we must clarify the relation between the realization of modern socialism and I individual's benefit. Education can lead people to conscientiously develop the forces of production, and can enlighten the individual dedicate him- or herself to the future of the nation.

## **2. The Function of Religious Culture and Ethics for the Establishment of Socialist Spiritual Civilization**

When Buddhism entered China, it was influenced by the political system, economy and traditional thought of Chinese culture. Gradually, it became sinicized. The rich history of Chinese Buddhism had extensive influence on social production and life. The culture of Buddhist studies, terminology, calligraphy, poetry, music, painting, sculpture, engraving, medicine, smelting, and so on, is a treasure unparalleled in China or abroad, and it provides invaluable material for research scholars around the world. Because we "examine the past to know the present," the value of this treasure cannot be overestimated.

Both ethics and law belong to the superstructure of society, and thus reflect their economic foundation. They are products of a class society. Religious ethics represent humanity's earliest formulation of religious concepts and creeds, which gradually evolved into written doctrine, prohibitions and systematic monastic orders. In the Pure Land sect of Buddhism, which embodies the ideal of compassion, all creatures live in peace and no evil is committed. In addition, the propagation of the public good, reciprocity and the spread of the "Pure Land" idea are emphasized, as well as universal prohibitions against killing, stealing, pornography and lying. In this religion, these moral principles are all well-developed. Religious ethics thus provide a norm for the thought and behavior of believers. Buddhism also demonstrates that actions, both good and bad, have consequences. The restraint that religious ethics places on believers can generate mutual sympathy and exerts a deep influence on society; if accepted by all the members of society, it can become the standard governing relations among working people.

The positive aspects of religious doctrine and ethics cannot be compared, of course, with the high ideals of Communism. There are fundamental differences between them. Still, there are also areas of agreement, especially on the level of ideals, ethics, culture, discipline, patriotism, and the love of people, labor, science and socialism, needed to establish a spiritual civilization in China. Because of this, we must resist those who inflexibly assert that religious ethics only serve the embellishment of religion. We should evaluate historically and dialectically the positive aspects of religious culture and ethics, explore the complementarity of religion and socialism, and seek ways in which religion can serve the establishment of a spiritual civilization of socialism. This is a new topic worthy of our research.

The purpose and starting point of religious ethics are not the same as Communist ethics. Nevertheless, this belief and its effects have a positive influence on unity and stability and can rectify the social atmosphere. We must work unceasingly to promote education in Communist ethics among the people, but at the same time, we do not want to abandon the usefulness of religious ethics for society. In everyday life, with its different vocations, economic benefits, political beliefs, personal circumstances and cultural levels, people have different ways of thinking. As a result, we should make use of every effective educational and popular means at our disposal to unify them for the basic good of establishing modern socialism. This is something which is both necessary and possible for us to do. On the basis of "seeking truth from facts," we should consider the levels of consciousness and ideology among the people, and recognize that some at present are unable to achieve a high ethical level. For these people, we can instill a low level of ethical awareness that would at least lead them to avoid evil conduct. If we can only combine the advanced thinking of some of the people with the positive aspects of religious thought in the others, then we would be able to lead the whole body of people forward, and consolidate their strength to vigorously establish socialism. The positive aspects of religious ethics can thus be made to complement socialism and to serve the founding of a socialist spiritual culture. We can affirm that religious ethics can be used in this positive way.

### **3. The Significance of International Religious Contacts**

The modern world is an open world; it is impossible for any country to develop in circumstances where it is cut off from others. The development of the economy, culture and science of China has already benefited from a policy of openness. These successes have been stimulated by mutual understanding and growing friendship with foreign countries. We must boldly increase the extent and depth of these contacts outside China.

In establishing contacts with other countries, we must face the challenges which contact with outside influences will bring, those which are beneficial to the people as well as those which are not. Because social systems are different, political concepts, ideas, emotions, ethics, values, and customs can never be completely the same. In the area of intellectual culture, we must distinguish the healthy from the poisonous, and increase our opposition to those influences which may corrupt. At the same time, we must seek the common ground with different positions by respecting what is best in them.

Some of the religious contacts already established have resulted in sincere and friendly exchanges. These have been with people who have heard mistaken views or possessed doubtful attitudes about the religious policies of China, but who wanted to learn more about the true situation. However, some of these people still harbor the old dream of infiltrating China with their religion and renewing their plan to control religion in China. With those visitors who promote peaceful friendship, we can express respect and support cooperation. Although there may be disagreements with them on certain concrete questions, we can still seek the common ground, and do not need to enter into controversies with them. But we must expose the misrepresentations and political plots of those who attempt to use every conceivable means to interfere in Chinese religious life, encourage religious fanaticism, plot to undermine the ideal of establishing socialism, or destroy the people's political power and peaceful social behavior. In this way we protect the honor of our country. All those who break our nation's laws should be treated in accordance with those laws. Different situations require different responses, but the overall purpose of our kind-hearted nation should be to emphasize the unity of the people without abandoning our principles.

Coming also implies going. In the past few years, the number of people from the religious world visiting abroad has also increased. This should be acknowledged as a sign of confidence in our country's religious policies and a sign of respect for our religious people. When these visitors go abroad, they naturally meet many kinds of challenges from opponents. China's patriotic religious believers have considerable experience with this kind of situation. They know that no matter how difficult the challenge might be, they should cultivate an attitude of self-respect, responsibility and honor which will frustrate their critics. After a religious friend of mine returned from abroad, he remarked "If your heart does not fear evil, then you can truly defeat evil. After going abroad, I have applied the principle of self-respect to my work, and have won the respect of many friends." The tendency toward an independent, self-run religion is understood and accepted by more and more people. Those who participate in the international arena must break through the closed thinking of the past and support the attempt of patriotic religious believers to develop strong ties with foreign friends. On the one hand, however, they must guard against pernicious influences; on the other, they should, guided by the principle of an independent, self-run, self-governed church, strive to unite with the more than sixty per cent of the world's population who are religious believers in order to expand their work and influence. In this way, the religious world can strengthen work for peace and contribute to the cause of human progress. These relationships cannot be curtailed, but should often be reviewed and adjusted in order to improve the overall situation.

#### **4. Strengthen Education on Religious Policy and its legal Implementation in order to Overcome the Confusion in Religion and Promote Unity and Stability**

At present there are in China problems associated with: free evangelism; excessive construction of temples and churches; the practice by some of cheating people into believing in religion, religious charlatans who willfully accept disciples, initiate monks and hold meetings; those who perform exorcisms, faith healings and all kinds of illegal activities in order to take money and goods from the people; those who fabricate rumors to mislead the people; and those who sponsor such counter-revolutionary activities as infiltration by enemy religious agents. These problems

are caused by a one-sided understanding of religious freedom as a stress on personal religious freedom that hindered the freedom of the mass of non-believers. This resulted in some people divorcing themselves from the correct policy and taking leave of social reality by creating social divisions in the name of propagating piety. Others make use of religion to enrich themselves. Another small group is motivated by political purposes and encourages dissent. In order to carry out the policy of religious freedom, we must intensify education to increase awareness of its true meaning. This policy should serve as a lawful basis for distinguishing reasonable demands and for treating those who violate the laws. No matter what problems arise or what means are used to solve them, the implementation of this policy will guide religious movements into their correct course and guarantee religious freedom while promoting unity and stability in society.

Religious believers should not think that the government religious departments are intended to limit religious activities. Under the conditions of socialism, no department can surpass the authority of the Party and government and act independently, and religion is no exception. The leadership of the Party and government over religion is primarily the leadership of guiding principles. The general affairs and internal problems of religion, as well as every of patriotic religious organization, should be considered from the point of view of the policy of religious freedom and the principles of self-government, self-propagation and self-support. These principles should be used as the basis for expanding work and establishing a religious consciousness characterized by autonomy. In this way, the supervisory capacity of the people can be strengthened, and a means of working and cooperating with the government and other organizations can be founded on democratic consultation. Thus the problems and opportunities inherent in the circumstances can be adequately addressed.

The government religious departments from top to bottom should consult with religious groups in order to discuss means of cooperating and the implementation of religious laws. This work of enacting laws which govern religion is an urgent and important task. If we had religious laws which concretely embody religious policy, then religion would have a standard on which to base investigations of illegal behavior. In the process of using these laws governing religion to determine right or wrong in an unprejudiced manner, the people's consciousness of law would be strengthened, and they would rely on the law in other areas as well. Consequently, we could guarantee that religious policy is completely and correctly implemented, and that the freedom of believers to believe and non-believers to not believe we also be protected. This would contribute to a situation of unity stability.

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translated by Craig Moran.

## **A Survey of the Situation of Seminary Graduates in Jiangsu Province - Sha Guangyi\***

Beginning in July last year we accompanied members of the Three-Self Association and the Christian Council of Jiangsu Province as they carried out a detailed six-month survey of the situation of seminary graduates in the entire province. We held discussions with the graduates in five places; namely, Nantong, Wuxi, Xuzhou, Yancheng and Huaiyin, hearing their ideas and work reports, as well as having personal interviews with some of the graduates. In this way we got a better understanding of their ideas and needs, and the practical difficulties they faced in their work. We also heard the views of local pastors, Christians and religious work cadres regarding the graduates, as well as their expectations of them. The results of our survey are recorded below.

### **1**

Since Nanjing Theological Seminary reopened in 1981, local Jiangsu Three-Self associations and Christian Councils have sent seventy-three qualified young Christians (some of whom have already worked as lay volunteers in the church for many years) to study there. Up to the present time, five groups totaling sixty persons have graduated, (these include fifty graduates of the practical course, eight from the four-year theology course and two from the graduate course). Of these sixty, nine returned to the seminary for further study after one or two years' work in the church. Three went abroad for further study (one publicly funded and two privately). One transferred to another province and another changed his line of work, both due to family matters. The work assignments of the remaining graduates were as follows: two remained at Nanjing Seminary to teach, one works for the national office of the TSPM and the CCC in Nanjing, one works at the Jiangsu provincial offices of these two organizations and forty-two others have been assigned to work at churches in twenty-four counties or cities throughout the province. The focal point of our survey are those forty-two graduates who are working on the church's front line.

Reactions from all sides attest to the fact that these graduates, no matter whether they were in the four-year theology course or the two-year practical course, all have a specific knowledge of theology. Their explanations of biblical teachings are not only historical but contain practical instruction, consist not only of theoretical exposition but concrete examples, and most of the Christians, upon hearing their sermons, consider them "congenial." Some Christians said that the sermons the graduates preach now differ greatly from those they preached when they were volunteer workers in the church. An old pastor told us that when the graduates first came to his church he was a little uncomfortable. He was afraid that they would not preach well and would scare the Christians away. But after hearing them a few times, he realized that their faith was orthodox, and that they did a thorough job of preaching the doctrine and this set his heart at ease.

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The graduates received a rather systematic theological education in the seminary, and they have a solid grounding in the areas of faith and spirituality. However, to combine spirituality with virtue, wisdom and unity with the masses is a problem which must be dealt with well. From our survey we see that most of the graduates eagerly face this problem and are working hard to solve it. In some places in northern Jiangsu Province some self-styled preachers appeared propagating such nonsense as "the three-self church is not under the spirit," and "we must listen to God and not to human beings." The seminary graduates working in those places clearly and repeatedly explained to the Christians why the Chinese Protestant church had to initiate the Three-Self Movement. They also explained the meaning of "under the spirit", "the relationship between God and human beings", and "what we must believe as Christians" in terms of church doctrine. In this way they were able to help many misguided believers to see the truth. When a graduate who had been assigned to work in a county church near Xuzhou discovered that some poorly informed Christians participated in the activities of the so-called "Lingling sect" ( which engages in unlawful activities under the guise of Christianity), he was really upset. Unconcerned about personal attack and unafraid of criticism, he repeatedly traveled the several kilometers to visit those Christians to speak frankly with them and to worship with them. During the worship services he preached true Biblical doctrine and discussed questions of faith with them. Finally, those Christians who had been deceived separated themselves from those who run the "Lingling sect" of their own accord.

Church work is a type of comprehensive mass work. To do church work well, it is not enough to have only religious knowledge. One must also possess knowledge in other fields and have the ability to work with the masses. At first, the main responsibility of one graduate who was assigned to a county church in the southern part of Jiangsu Province was preaching sermons. The Christians had little reaction to his sermons, but he himself felt that he was doing a competent job. Later, at the time of a term change election, he was elected vice-chairperson of the city Three-Self committee. This job entailed the writing of all kinds of reports and summaries. He felt incompetent, and therefore had to use his free time to increase his knowledge of language and to study related subjects.

A graduate of the practical course was transferred to Nantong. In the beginning, because he was unfamiliar with the people and the place, he could not empathize with the thoughts and feelings of the Christians there. So the work of visiting the Christians became a "millstone" for him. Later he willingly took on the attitude of an elementary school student and humbly sought the advice of the older leaders and volunteer church workers. Sometimes he asked the older volunteers to accompany him on his visits. Gradually he got to know the Christians and developed friendly relations with them. Now his Christian visitation work has extended to the villages in the suburbs. When doing visitation work he resolutely brings the Three-Self patriotic spirit to their hearts. Thus he is helping to unite all the Christians of Nantong in efforts to run their church more effectively.

For historical reasons, in the Protestant church of Yancheng the Christians from a Presbyterian background and those from a True Jesus Church background have never been able to get along with each other. The prejudices of the old pastors of each community run quite deep. In September 1988, a graduate of the practical course was assigned there to work. Because this graduate was from a Presbyterian background, in the beginning the elders of the True Jesus

community would not even let him live at the church. Although this graduate found it difficult being caught between the two factions, he adhered to the teachings of his seminary professors and the spirit of the religious policy, and tried to promote unity between the two groups. The True Jesus pastor would not let the graduate preach sermons, but at the weekly gathering of the True Jesus people for worship, he came forward on his own to perform acts of service, like leading hymn singing. He visited Christians from both backgrounds, the Presbyterian and the True Jesus. In the course of time, the elder and the other members of the True Jesus community developed a good impression of him. On their own initiative, at Pentecost last year, the True Jesus people proposed that they help with his financial support.

Convincing evidence to show that the seminary graduates are maintaining their virtue, knowledge, spirituality and closeness to the masses is apparent in the following figures: Of the forty-two surveyed, nine are in charge of Three-Self work at the county or city level, sixteen hold the offices of assistant general secretary, vice-chairperson or above in Three-Self associations or China Christian Councils, and eleven are members or Standing Committee members of the Chinese Peoples Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at the city or county level. In 1987, following assessment and recommendation by the Three-Self associations and Christian Council in each place, pastors from the provincial-level of those bodies ordained four of the seminary graduates as pastors. This was the first time since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee that young pastors were ordained in our province.

Nevertheless, while we affirm the main trends in the lives of the seminary graduates, we cannot help but notice that among a minority of graduates there remain varying degrees of vagueness in knowledge about socialism and patriotism, about Three-Self policy and about the policy of religious freedom. They have the mistaken idea that religion "surpasses politics." They inappropriately emphasize that faith is above all, and they force into the faith, and what's more praise, some things which are clearly not in harmony with socialism. When the Three-Self association and Christian Council in one city decided to send a graduate to a county church to work and told him to report first to the county Three-Self committee, he did not go, saying, "I have my own road, and I will go my own way in the future." Which road will he follow then? Apparently he does not want to follow the leadership of the Three-Self Movement. Rather he will follow the road of "free evangelism."

## 2

Once seminary graduates are assigned to work at a church, there are two kinds of persons they will come in contact with on a daily, or at least regular, basis. One is the old clergy and evangelists, and the other is government cadres in religious work. To deal well with them is beneficial not only for church work but for developing maturity in the seminary graduates themselves.

A county in southern Jiangsu has over five thousand Christians. The sole pastor is already over seventy. Church work poses some difficulties for him and so there has been little development. Only in 1985, with much difficulty, did the leaders of the concerned departments obtain a graduate of Nanjing Seminary to work in their county. However, when that graduate, heart

brimming with joy, stepped through the church door, little did he realize that the old pastor would frown on everything he did. Whether the graduate performed some task in the church or failed to perform it, the pastor was always critical of him. So for a while the graduate was thinking of leaving that church. Later he reflected: my father is a pastor, too, about the same age as this pastor; if I, as a member of the younger generation, treat this pastor with respect, then perhaps things will change. After deciding on this course of action, he showed his concern for the pastor in everyday life, while in church work, he paid respectful attention to the old pastor's opinions. In his own words: "I became a son to this old pastor." At last the old pastor changed his view of the graduate, and now the two of them work very well together. When a resurgence of denominationalism wreaked havoc in church work in a neighboring county, the county where these two were was unaffected, and the religious situation there remained normal. In 1987, when this graduate was ordained a pastor, the old pastor was very supportive of him.

In a county church on the shores of the Yellow Sea in northern Jiangsu live two old persons and two young persons. The old ones are the original elders of the church, while the young ones are graduates of the practical course at Nanjing Seminary. They usually pair off, one old and one young, to go to the countryside to visit the Christians and to conduct worship services. This occupies them about half of each month. They are united in mind and heart as they strive to administer the church well. In spite of the difficulties, they have worked hard to build up the church at the most basic level and so self-styled preachers cannot get a foothold in that area.

Among the Three-Self associations and Christian Councils in ten provincial cities and the Three-Self associations in the forty-nine counties, as well as in the twelve hundred churches and meeting points in the province, there are many more examples like this of young old church workers (including young volunteers and old evangelists) working together to run the church well. Are there any places where young and old church workers do not work well together, even to the point of having sharp differences? Our survey did not avoid this question.

In a northern Jiangsu city which has a relatively large Christian population, there have been for some time, two diametrically opposed parties in the Three-Self association and the Christian Council - old party (made up of the old pastors) and the new party (the seminary graduates). No one spends time trying to solve the problem of the return of the church building which has been occupied by another unit since the Cultural Revolution. The church land has been encroached upon by its neighbors, but no one inquires about this. "Lingling sect" activities are rampant, but no one concerns themselves with them. Their energies are expended on internal struggle and mutual conflict. The situation is so bad at times that business meetings of the two organizations cannot take place. Even more serious is that their differences have carried over into the Christian community, with result that some Christians are dissatisfied with and biased toward the old pastors.

We have analyzed the situation in those churches where relations between young and old church workers have not been sorted out to complete satisfaction. There are three main reasons:

The first is a struggle for power. For instance, the problem just mentioned arose because the former chairman of the Three-Self association had designated the next chairman and director before his own death. However his instructions were not carried out. Rather another old pastor took charge of the work of the Three-Self association and the Christian Council and this resulted in the estrangement between young and old. In spite of efforts by concerned persons, the problem has not been resolved, and the estrangement is getting more and more serious.

The second reason is the generation gap. This is not so much a matter of religion as of attitudes towards individual behavior. Besides his church work, one graduate carries out a little side-line business to supplement the family income. There is an old evangelist in that church who does not care for this graduate's running a sideline business from the church property where he lives. She wonders how a person in the service of the Lord can be involved in making money. The chasm which has developed between her and this seminary graduate over a period of time is impassable. She would like to leave her job, but she realizes she cannot give up church work.

The third reason is misunderstandings. When the time came for settling accounts for the construction of a church in a certain county, the church elder (a fit pastor in all other respects) did not handle the finances very well and a discrepancy of 1,400 yuan was discovered. In the past, the church had several times suggested that this pastor be given 90 yuan per month for living expenses. But because his children supported him, he always refused. When the financial error surfaced, the elder was very worried. After consultation, the county Religious Affairs Office and concerned persons in the church decided to give him sixteen months salary, which would allow him to make up the discrepancy. Because this solution was not explained clearly to the seminary graduate who headed the committee in charge of church affairs, he regarded the elder as someone who did not practice what he preached.

In the process of studying the situation of the seminary graduates, we had the opportunity to exchange opinions with local cadres in religious work on the Christian leadership succession problem. Their basic view was that, in light of the serious problem presented by the ageing of the pastorate, the training of successors should be accelerated. Faced with the reality that most of the Christians live in the countryside, they felt that youthful church-loving Christians in the countryside who are willing to devote their talents and energies to serving the church should be the focus of such training. If they are enabled to undergo two years' study in seminary, to develop a correct political outlook, to understand the three-self patriotic principle and gain a substantial knowledge of Christianity, then they are capable of serving the church in the countryside.

How do the seminary graduates view the government cadres in religious work? At a brief meeting in Yancheng one seminary graduate, speaking from his own experience, expressed his heartfelt thoughts in this way: those non-believers who are most concerned for the church are the government workers in charge of religious work. Without their leadership, support and help, many matters undertaken by the church could not be done well. This is true in both the public and the private sector. He went on to describe how a religious affairs official

went to great lengths to have his family transferred from a remote country village to a production unit in the suburbs of the city so that he could settle into his job without worrying about them.

In Nantong, a modern Protestant church towers above the rest of the buildings in its neighborhood. Comrades in the city's Religious Affairs Bureau spared no effort over the construction of this church, from the planning stages, to the preparation of the land, to the start of construction, to the finishing, so that local Christians would have a place to practice their faith. When a seminary graduate was assigned there, construction of the church had not yet been completed. Nevertheless, the Religious Affairs Bureau contacted the concerned departments to see that everything was arranged for the graduate's board and lodging.

Of course there are instances of a lack of accord between cadres in religious work and the seminary graduates. No matter whether these are conflicts in work or in ideology, the two parties have only to treat each other sincerely and with goodwill, and the problem can be solved. The father of a graduate working at a church near Suzhou City was hurried rather than being cremated following his death and the graduate was criticized for this by the Religious Affairs Office. But the graduate did not argue or become downcast. Rather he continued to devote all his energy to service of the church, to seeing that religious activities were normalized in that area. When the situation had calmed down, he found an appropriate time to explain to the cadres in the Religious Affairs Office why his father was buried rather than being cremated, thus clearing up the misunderstanding. Now the cooperation between this graduate and the Religious Affairs cadres is just as good as it was before.

A well-known overseas Chinese from America made a donation to the expansion of his alma mater, located in a county under the jurisdiction of the city of Suzhou. As part of the expansion it was the county government's plan to claim a building belonging to the church for the school. The county government initiated discussions with the Religious Affairs Office and the seminary graduate responsible for the Three-Self work in the county. A rumor began in the church community that the graduate was going to sell off church property. Some Christians even sought him out and begged him not to be "a prodigal son." The graduate's feeling about this difficult situation was two-fold: that the church has a responsibility to support the educational enterprise of the government', and that, in dealing with church property, we cannot allow the church to suffer loss. Therefore, on the one hand he sought the agreement of the leading members of the Three-Self association and through them got the support of a core group of Christians. On the other hand he asked the county Religious Affairs Office to expand the property on which the present church sat and to erect an additional building corresponding in size to the original one. In this way a satisfactory solution was arrived at.

### 3

In meeting and speaking with the seminary graduates, we felt that some of them were lacking in our traditional Chinese spirit of "bearing hardship." They think that because they have received two to four years of theological education, their work at the church should involve only preaching, to the exclusion of all else. One graduate who works at a county level church unexpectedly asked the church members to hire a handyman whose

task it would be to clean up the Church premises. One graduate assigned to a city church, claiming that "the church should not become a bureaucracy," seldom came to church to work, except to take his monthly turn at preaching. He even moved the sofa from the church to his own home for the comfort of visiting parishioners and guests. When one church was preparing to receive some foreign guests, the old pastor, while sweeping the church courtyard, called to a graduate to come and help him remove a bamboo fence. The graduate paid no attention to him. Finally, the old pastor had to ask a non-believer off the street to come and help him.

Such examples reflect the actions of a few and not the main trend among the seminary graduates, but these small indications cannot help but give us pause. The theology students trained in today's socialist China should be able to preach, to take charge of all kinds of religious activities and do church work well. They should also be adept at working with the masses and receiving visitors, and gladly undertake all kinds of church work. How can they do these things if they do not have something of the spirit of "bearing hardship'?" A woman graduate working at church in a county under the jurisdiction of the city of Zhenjiang is the only full time evangelist at that church. She does everything: looking after the church, preaching, cleaning, and purchasing all the equipment needed at the church. She not only has responsibility for the main church, but she preaches at a meeting point in the countryside too. Putting aside her own fatigue or household matters, on Sundays she preaches at the main church in the morning and rushes to the countryside to preside at the worship service there in the afternoon. Last year she was elected to the executive committee of the "Zhenjiang City Women's Federation, the youngest of nine persons on the committee. One 1987 graduate of the practical course was assigned to a rural meeting point located twenty-five km. from the city of Yancheng. Because the church property problem there had not yet been settled, upon his arrival, there was not even a place for him to live. But he wasn't keeping score, nor begrudging his own tiredness. He rode his bicycle everyday from Yancheng to that meeting point. For two years he did a solid job forming that fairly large Christian community, and gradually put them on the right track. With the recommendation of the county Three-Self association, he returned to the seminary last year to continue his study in the regular four-year theology course.

#### 4

Without having made a deep analysis of the material gathered during the survey, I only want to jot down a few thoughts regarding my understanding of the thinking, work, progress, requests, troubles and difficulties of our province's seminary graduates.

1. Since the Chinese Protestant church separated itself from the control of foreign mission boards, its appearance has undergone a basic change. Our Country's Christian religious personnel and believers should be able to run all levels of the Protestant church better and make it a church compatible with a socialist society. The highest importance should be given to solving the problem of leadership succession in the Protestant church. The future look of our Chinese Protestant church and the role it will play in society depends on who will take over leadership in the church, whether or not the political and

religious standards of the young generation of religious professionals can be raised even higher, and whether or not they can faithfully carry out the Party's religious policy. If real effective methods are not chosen to solve this problem of succession, in perhaps three to five years time, difficulties will arise in many places. For example after the old pastor in charge of the Three-Self association and Christian Council in one of our provincial cities died and there was no suitable person to succeed him, the work of these two bodies fell into a situation of paralysis. Some persons with ulterior motives seized their opportunity and this adversely affected the normalization of Christian activities in that city. Concerned departments in the city could do nothing but consult with higher authority, with the result that a person from the provincial Three-Self and Christian Council organizations was sent to concurrently take charge of the work in that city.

2. To unite and teach the Christian seminary graduates is a long-term and painstaking job. If this work is done well, then file Christian leaders, who are in the same boat and presently cooperating with the Party and government, will be able to maintain a relative stability and even continue to develop it. The prerequisites for implementing the Party's religious policy will be continuously and effectively guaranteed. The main trends among the seminary graduates are good, but because individuals are subject to all kinds of influences and conditions, they have vague and biased perceptions regarding certain issues. This should not be considered strange. Government departments concerned with religious work should warmly unite with them, show concern for them and help them to raise and make continual progress in their consciousness. Because a graduate's outlook may be confused or he has made some small mistake, government departments absolutely should not place him in a position of opposition to us. We should patiently and unremittingly educate the seminary graduates to support the leadership of the Party, support socialism, support the unification of the country as well as running the church independently and autonomously. While we require them to live up to strict standards in politics and work, we should realistically solve the concrete problems they meet in everyday life.

3. Support and help for the growth in maturity of the seminary graduates is the foremost duty of the older generation of pastors. The seminary graduates are young and they do not have much background. It cannot be denied that their work experience is insufficient. If they are long denied the chance to preach or to do any real work among the believers, or to get practical training in church work because of this, then their youthful years will be forfeit and the church will suffer a great loss. Jiangsu Province has four hundred thousand Protestant Christians but only fifty-some old pastors, the youngest of whom is over sixty while the oldest is already one hundred years old. If we completely depend on the older generation of pastors to lead the church, then it will be very difficult to adapt to changing circumstances and to meet the religious needs of the believers. Taking range view, the responsibility for administering all levels Chinese Protestant church will sooner or later fall on the should the younger generation of Christian professionals.

*Religion, No. 17 (January, 1990), pp. 75-81.*

Translated by Fr. Peter Barry.

## In Defense of Our Seminary Graduates - Bat Shui\*

Recently, I read some articles in your magazine (*Tian Feng*) about the training of theological students. They give the impression that the present generation of theological students is of poor quality and shoddy behavior, and it describes a number of cases which seem to prove this. Whatever the authors might have intended with their articles, their effect is to leave us disinterested in this generation of theological students. The students themselves have voiced some complaints about the situation and some church members have even lost hope. Can this be an accurate picture? No, definitely not. I think it is high time to say something in vindication of our young seminary graduates.

When we discuss this problem, we should look at it from all sides and concentrate on the majority instead of picking out isolated cases. Over the last ten years, the church in China has trained more than six hundred theological students, the overwhelming majority of whom are now serving in the church and doing well. Some are outstandingly successful, some have already taken over major responsibilities and have been ordained, some have been elected to Three-Self Committees or Christian Councils at different levels and are working in leadership positions. There can be no doubt that training of young theologians in new China has achieved good results. We have made some first steps to overcome the intensifying shortage of ministers. This has been a positive experience.

Out of sixty-nine students who have graduated from Zhongnan Theological Seminary over the last five years, all but one doing post graduate studies at Nanjing Theological Seminary are full time church workers. Church leaders in all five provinces involved can attest that they are doing well. And seven out of eight students who had to abandon their studies due to bad health are still serving the church.

I suggest that the whole question of training new people should be discussed by focusing on major trends and illustrated with positive cases. There are so many touching examples which bear vivid testimony to the theological students who are so urgently needed by our church.

As a patriotic three-self church, our church today is a sovereign church, clearly different from the foreign controlled churches we had in the past. This determines what kind of new co-workers the church has to raise up. The conditions and environment in which the church finds itself today, the tasks on today's agenda, the problems and difficulties, are all quite different from those our older generation of theologians had to face in the past. Today, demands are much higher and even the young and inexperienced are plunged straight away into leading the diverse and complicated work of the church. Therefore, the question of what type of successors need to be trained is of decisive significance for the future look of the religious organizations in our country. In many respects, today's theological students are very well qualified. Their cultural and scientific knowledge, their social awareness, their commitment and initiative, their sensitivity to new developments and their hopes in life, even their basic knowledge of faith and their religious education: all surpass those of previous generations of theological students.

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\* Bai Shui is a pen name.

One must also consider the fact that for a long time religion was under the influence of leftist thinking. Hence, the masses don't yet have a full understanding of the role of the church in society. Problems and difficulties have emerged within the church itself. For young Christians to keep their gaze fixed straight ahead, looking neither to the left nor right, with stalwart determination in their devotion to the spreading of the gospel would be commendable indeed. Could they make such a decision without a firmly grounded faith and a devoted zeal? Simply to enter the seminary, they have already undergone so many strains and pressures from all sides.

I know all those complaints being voiced about some theological students: "they cannot preach"; "their preaching is wrong"; "they lack spiritual knowledge"-, "they are not qualified for pastoral work." Some even say that theological students "don't meet the standard of lay leaders who have just finished a training class." I admit that students who have just started work often have evident shortcomings. But this problem must be handled with proper understanding. One cannot blame the students for it! From a spiritual perspective, God bestows different gifts upon his people. As we can see from the Greek word for "gift," *charisma*, which is derived from *charis*, meaning "grace," the personal talents we receive from God are bestowed on us solely by grace. If we all earnestly pray together to God for the grace of greater gifts and thereby submit ourselves to the uniting guidance of the Holy Spirit, and if we in fulfilling our individual duties mutually support each other as members of one body, then we will certainly run the church well (see 1 Cor. 12:28-31, 1 Pet. 4:10, Eph. 4:7).

From a rather down-to-earth point of view, one can simply ask: Who is responsible for bad results of an educational process in which the students are no more than recipients? If, after several years of training, results are as bad as quoted, how can one put the blame on the fact that the seedling has not been chosen well? This is something for all seminaries to earnestly consider: Even a good seedling is wasted, if it is not raised and supervised well. As an old saying goes: "If the son does not study, the father missed his duty; where education is neglected, the teacher has failed."

Many problems, while manifesting themselves as shortcomings of the students, actually say something about the quality of seminary training! A seminary may be seen as a spiritual processing plant. We process the raw material (carefully selected material, of course), which we hope, through meticulous and able craftsmanship and the proper tools, to turn into useful products. And if the quality of the product is bad or the product has to be scrapped, one cannot blame the raw material. "Unchiselled jade won't make a vessel; a man without education won't understand righteousness": this saying is still true.

You hear certain complaints about some theological students: "they lack humility"; "they get up late"; "they are afraid of work"; "they don't follow the rules" and so forth. Even if that is the case, one should analyze the reasons. Discipline problems are basically still educational problems. Weren't we all young once? Why can we not use the experience of our own youth fruitfully in dealing with today's theological students? As soon as they show any imperfection, people attack them disdainfully. Seeing the speck in the students' eye, they denounce them as "lazybones," "unspiritual elements," "stumbling blocks," and

relegate them to the background. Thus, they make no use of them and don't entrust them with work. But if on the contrary they are good and successful, then people fear that high prestige may lead to arrogance, or they are even afraid that these young people may seize power. As a result, the most able students are sometimes given only odd jobs, or rather simple tasks. They are kept from preaching at Sunday services, they are not admitted to certain meetings, they have no say in the church's affairs, and even their ordination is put off again and again. No wonder that the students who have just started working feel distressed about this. This is certainly not the way to encourage and foster beginners. I think it is first and foremost up to us to stimulate their enthusiasm and win them over by setting an example of devotee service. We should love them and take good care of them as if they were our own children.

In addition, there are two practical problems which need to be discussed. The first one concerns the assignments of seminary graduates, which is handled inflexibly: return to whence you came. Regardless of whether or not the area has a church or regular meeting point activities, whether or not housing and financial support are available, graduates are without exception sent back to their native soil. Consequently, after their return they are confronted with a lot of practical problems which the provincial Three-Self and Christian Councils are unable to solve despite all their goodwill.

I know of one student who upon his return from seminary found the quarters to be provided to him by the meeting point had been rented out, to a non-Christian. The Christians there contribute so little money that he was without any salary for several months. He was lucky enough to have his parents nearby. He now lives with them and still relies on their financial support. In another case, a female student has been appointed to a meeting point on a state farm. In the busy season they cannot meet, and then she is without income. As a gesture of support, the farm gave her a piece of land to till. But can a twenty-one year old girl all on her own do farm work for a living? Such cases are common in our province. On the other hand, students from the cities still go back to work in city churches, where living and working conditions are far better. It is hard to believe that this human-engendered difference between city and countryside reflects God's will, City churches are overstaffed, while rural churches can hardly find anybody. Isn't it time to look into this problem carefully? Should we not be training new personnel for the majority of our churches: the 95 per cent in the countryside?

The second problem concerns an administrative difficulty. This difficulty points up the fact that selfish reasons do not necessarily lie behind young people's desire to stay away from the countryside. Young graduates naturally want to commit themselves full-time. But if they have no official residence permit for a certain area, they cannot work there full-time. If they are holding a farmer's residence permit, they are obliged to grow good crops in their own village and to sell the required amount of grain to the state. If they live somewhere else and engage in another profession, they must pay a fixed sum every month to the village committee. If they work outside their native village in a city or town without a residence permit, they have no way to obtain ration cards for grain and oil. And if they stay away for some time, they will violate the national residence law. And above all, eating other people's rice, is improper for Christians. Thus, their only alternative is to

register as a preacher in their home village meeting point - but this is entirely nominal, and certainly not in accord with the aim of theological training. At this point, we can only urge our national Committee for Theological Education to painstakingly investigate this problem and find a solution!

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me..."(Ps. 139:23- 24). These lines in defense of our theological students have been written out of concern for the future of the church and the training of new and qualified personnel. I could say more, but would rather stop here and leave it to you whether my considerations are in accordance with God's will. I welcome your valuable corrections and hope that the questions I have raised will be widely discussed.

*Tian Feng*, March, 1990, pp. 12-13.  
Translated by Gotthard Oblau.

## Interview with Dr. Chou Lien-Hw - Ya Min

Taiwan church leader Chou Lien-hwa (Zhou Lianhua), at the invitation of the China Christian Council and the Chinese Protestant Three-Self Movement Committee, visited mainland China from 5-22 January 1991, speaking in three seminaries and several churches. He was warmly received by Chinese Christians in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Cixi, and Nanjing, among other places. Prior to his return to Taiwan he gave the following interview in Nanjing to *Tian Feng's (TF)* special correspondent.

**TF:** You visited a number of places and churches on this trip. Would you share with us some of your impressions and experiences?

**Chou:** Before I came, I had already heard how the churches were thriving, but this was only hearsay. It was only after this visit that I realized and appreciated what has been taking place. Had I not seen it with my own eyes I would not have believed how faithfully the believers are seeking the Lord.

I spoke in many churches the three Sundays of my visit. At each church it was the same, they were completely filled long before the service was to begin. I went to my hometown of Cixi in Zhejiang Province. There I was privileged to speak in the Hu Shan Church. Before we got to the church we could see a great many bicycles all over the place. When we arrived this very small place was packed with more than 1,900 people, some even sitting on the stairs and around the altar it was so crowded. At noon 1,200 stayed for a meal together, 120 tables with 10 people to a table. At one o'clock in the afternoon there was another service and another in the evening. It was an experience that would move anyone. At their request I brought a half-hour message that afternoon, in the Ningbo dialect. If you asked me what was the most unforgettable impression of this trip it would have to be my day at the Hu Shan Church. I'm sure part of that feeling is because it is my own home area.

**TF:** I'm sure before your trip you heard rumors and talk about the church on the mainland. Is what you heard the same as what you now have seen?

**Chou:** Before this trip I had met leaders of the Three-Self Movement and the China Christian Council on an individual basis, and so we knew each other. Moreover, I had some understanding of the three-Self Movement itself. I also have my own conviction that the church must be self-governing, and this is something I say everywhere, not just in China. In Taiwan, some people misunderstand Three-Self, but I do not, so sometimes I am not always understood by my own co-workers and colleagues.

I feel that in these years the church in China has not only held on to its faith, but it has been a faithful witness, and this has led many to a special admiration for such faith and witness. Those of us from the outside have not had your experience and we are unable to understand all the efforts which the churches have made. Because there is a gap between us, we know little about the churches on the mainland. But apart from this, we know the work of the Lord has been revived, and he will definitely see through to the end. I greatly admire the work of co-workers and colleagues on the mainland.

Faith is not dependent upon education or knowledge, but rather lies in following the experience of the Lord. People can stand fast in (heir faith under any and all circumstances. I feel the believers here have done this. Christians from overseas have misunderstandings, but I feel they do not know what they are saying.

Before I came here I prayed constantly, and I thought much about the role I should try to play on this trip. Without a doubt, and despite my age, I felt I should come as an ordinary follower of the Lord, a brother in Christ. I brought very little luggage, and besides my Bible I didn't bring anything, not even a camera. I did not want to come as a tourist, and I did not ask to see any of the sights. I stayed near West Lake in Hangzhou four days, but I did not tour the lake. I wanted to spend as much time with my Christian brothers and sisters as possible.

Even though I preached at every stop I feel personally I did not preach well. I am a preacher of the gospel, and so when my hosts asked me to preach, I took the opportunity to do so.

**TF:** Would you compare the church in Taiwan with the church on the mainland on the basis of your experience? Tell us what you see as the good and bad points of both, and give us your suggestions.

**Chou:** In Taiwan we have more preachers and church workers. Here they are few. So I hope that not only will there be an increasing number of preachers here but that more will come to study in the seminaries. I think your method of training voluntary church workers is very good.

I think that in some places you could also train recently retired people as voluntary workers. If those who are sixty to seventy years old and retired could take a year's training, they might possibly have nine or so years left of ministry. Because they have pensions they need not worry about their livelihood. That would be a good thing. Training workers so that every meeting point can have someone in charge is important, and in the larger churches, voluntary workers can be a great help.

I feel parents tend to think that their children will always be children. But gradually young people need to strike out on their own. They may make mistakes, but they will learn in the process.

**TF:** The church in China has already entered a "post-denominational" period. We have had discussions about the indigenization of theology and the question of a Chinese theology. What is your view of these matters?

**Chou:** As I just said, those of us coming from the outside do not know enough to adequately discuss such questions, so we can only talk about principles. Without denominations, everyone can be together and in harmony and this is good. There is a generation gap, but this is a short-coming with a hidden advantage: the younger generation has absolutely no concept of denominations. If a fairly good church organization can be set up the next generation will accept it without question. We should not want to copy some former denomination. The Anglican Church has several hundred years of tradition as have the Presbyterians and others. Those who lived before such traditions were also seeking good forms of church government,

seeking to correct their shortcomings, so that they would be suitable to English and American situations. The principles of the churches are basically the same. They have come down to us from New Testament times -- Bible study, preaching, hymn singing, prayer and so forth. Out of this great framework and from our Chinese background we can consider the development of a suitable system of government in and for the church.

**TF:** Yesterday when you spoke with the younger teachers at Nanjing Theological Seminary you said that Three-Self still had a "self-thinking" problem. Could you elaborate on this?

**Chou:** For Three-Self to develop even better, so that it can govern well, support well and evangelize well, a "think tank" is needed. We need to understand the situation in each locality. For example in Zhejiang Province, Wenzhou and Hangzhou are not alike. So a "think tank" would take note of the background differences of each locality and its particular needs. At the same time attention should be given to theological trends overseas. For example, although hymn singing in American churches is different from in our own, we still need to know about how others adapt Christianity to their church life. Those on the front lines have little time to think about such things. So there must be people behind them who can give themselves to level headed, calm observation and reflect upon the situation.

**TF:** Churches in China and overseas continue to discuss how to make the church in China Chinese. But no one seems to have any original ideas. What is your view?

**Chou:** I will say again, I am from the outside, but I am in favor of the church being a part of its own local setting. The gospel should not be changed, the contents should not be changed, but the packaging should be changed.

Before the Seven-Up soft drink arrived on the Taiwan market, Taiwan had developed a very good soft drink called Hei Sung. The managers of Seven-Up sent representatives to look into marketing Seven-Up in Taiwan. On the basis of investigation they made four decisions: First, the Hei Sung bottle was large, so Seven-Up could also be sold in a large bottle. Second, the Hei Sung selling price was low, so Seven-Up saw they must lower their cost of production. Third, the Taiwanese had soft drinks before their meals whereas Americans drank at work breaks or at recreation times and at places of entertainment. Drinks, consumed before meals must not be too sweet, so they decided to cut the amount of sugar in Seven-Up. Fourth, the Seven-Up company in Hong Kong had already given Seven-Up a good Chinese name that was pleasing to the Chinese. So they decided to use this name and enter the Taiwan soft drink market. Two years later Seven-Up was well established in the Taiwan market.

The traditional preaching of the gospel has begun with the doctrine of sin. But the Bible has much more in it than just a discussion of sin. The Bible says, for example, that faith in the Lord results in many blessings, and it speaks of the Lord's protection and so forth. But our evangelistic meetings are forever coming from only one direction, which is not to say we should not begin with sin, but that there may be other approaches in presenting the message. Seven-Up put in less sugar and changed its name, but the product did not change, the content did not change and the result was a great success.

**TF:** During these weeks you have visited three of our seminaries, in Hangzhou, Shanghai and Nanjing. What has been your impression of the seminaries?

**Chou:** I asked the students of the three seminaries the same question: Why study theology? Most of their answers were the same, that they came to study because of God's call, God's love and saving grace. The same reasons are given by seminarians overseas. But there are also different reasons for studying in theology in China. They came to seminary because there was such a shortage of preachers and the present leadership in the churches is elderly, as in the words of the old saying "the old crop is almost gone and the new crop not yet harvested." This is a special feature for theological seminaries in China. I might also add that it is good to see more men than women students in seminaries here, because there are more women than men in our seminaries in Taiwan.

Seminary education involves not just taking classes but the experience of spiritual life. I hope seminary teachers will take the students to ever higher spiritual truths and experiences. A lot of people think that if you are highly educated then the spiritual life is lacking. I have found that increased knowledge can heighten the spiritual life. Both of these, knowledge and spirit are equally important and they help each other like two yoked horses advancing together to pull the wagon.

**TF:** Today there are some Christians from abroad who come to China on their own to carry out covert and underground evangelistic activity. Their efforts are not helpful for building up and strengthening church in China, and may even result in the opposite. How do you view this kind of activity?

**Chou:** I absolutely oppose this kind of behavior on the part of Christians from abroad. I feel when we go to a country we must obey that country's laws and follow the lead of the local church. If someone feels that a certain country's church has a particular need, he or she may go to the church with suggestions or offers of help. For example, I came to China this time for only a few days, and so there are many things I do not feel qualified to discuss. My understanding of the situation is very superficial. If a person comes to China with an open heart, and with good intentions then his methods should also be open and good.

**TF:** Could you tell us something about your work in Taiwan?

**Chou:** Besides preaching, I also teach theology at the seminary, write and help with Bible translation work. I am also managing a publication firm called the Taiwan Christian Literature Council. In recent years Taiwan churches have been strengthening their evangelistic outreach ministries. They hope that by the year 2000, Taiwan will have two million church members. It is possible that God will call me home before the year 2000 but this program will go on as it does not depend on any one person or group. It is a joint project that all are undertaking together.

**TF:** What do you think is the greatest challenge to the Taiwan church today?

**Chou:** Now that the living standard is higher people put too much emphasis upon the material. They are out to get more things and be entertained, and this has led to a decreasing interest in matters of faith.

Folk religion in Taiwan today is flourishing, but this is also tied to the material. Everyone comes together to build a temple hoping the gods will bless them with more greater earnings for the coming year. They even ask the gods for help with their gambling!

**TF:** What do you see or hope for our young people?

**Chou:** The first and most important is to be good servants of God. Second, to be good servants of your fellow human beings, to understand what it is to be a man or woman. Third, to enrich yourselves spiritually, for only by knowing yourselves, can you become worthy evangelists.

*Tian Feng, April, 1991, pp. 24-26.*

Translated by Britt E. Towery.

## A "True Israelite" - Xu Rulei\*

John 1:47

Y.T. Wu, Chair of the Chinese Protestant Patriotic Three-Self Movement left us exactly ten years ago (1989). In commemorating the tenth anniversary of his death, I think especially of one Bible passage. Recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel according to John, that passage recounts the story of Jesus' choosing his disciples.

Among the disciples there was one called Nathaniel. When Philip found Nathaniel, he said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." But Nathaniel replied "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" This was because Nathaniel remembered the prophets' words: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah... from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel" (Mt. 2:6).

It was this same Nathaniel of whom Jesus exclaimed, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathaniel said what he thought but was not persistently stubborn. When he actually saw Jesus, when Jesus pointed him out as he sat waiting silently and in purity of heart for the Savior under the fig tree, he immediately and wholeheartedly followed the truth, praising Jesus as the "Son of God", "the King of Israel."

I believe Y.T. Wu's entire life was one of seeking the truth "without deceit." His was a life of upright character, matching Jesus' exclamation, "A True Israelite."

Let us look at how Y.T. Wu was "without deceit," or how he sincerely dealt with issues arising from both religious faith and socio-political questions.

Born into a non-Christian family in 1893, Wu believed all along that Christianity was superstition. He only became a Christian after many years of probing and exploring. In 1911, the year he turned eighteen, Wu joined a summer camp sponsored by the Beijing YMCA. This was the beginning of his contact with Christianity.

During the camp Wu heard many lectures on religion and his attitude towards Christianity changed. He felt that the universe and all creation could "only be from God, the Lord of creation." This understanding was like a gospel seed sown in fertile soil which in time would sprout from Wu's heart.

In 1913 Wu heard the American Dr. John R. Mott speak. In 1917 began to read the Bible and to pray and later heard many religious lectures at the YMCA. Along with several like-minded youths, Wu discussed the principles of Christianity.

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On 1 January 1918 Wu read the Gospel according to Matthew and suddenly had "a great revelation," he was "speechless with joy." That same month at a Beijing YMCA-sponsored revival led by the American Frank Buchman, Wu was greatly moved by what he heard. One evening when Buchman was preaching on the theme repentance from sin, Wu was the first to rise and confess.

In April of the same year, the American evangelist Sherwood Eddy came to Beijing. At the services, Wu made a decision to join the church. Afterward, he joined a Beijing Congregational Church Bible study class and prepared to be baptized. On 3 May he was tested on his faith and character and on 2 June was baptized and joined the church. This was the turning point in Wu's life.

Seven years transpired from the time Wu came into contact with Christianity until he was baptized. Those were seven years of genuine searching and seven deeply moving years of continuously accepting God's revelation.

Following his baptism, Wu became increasingly enthusiastic about Bible study, prayer, worship and participation in YMCA activities. Beijing YMCA's Student Department leaders greatly valued his character and talents and wanted him to resign his job at the Customs Bureau and come to work at the YMCA. Wu promised to consider the idea.

By September 1920, Wu finally convinced his family and tendered his resignation to the Customs Bureau. This caused some misunderstanding among many acquaintances and a number of friends said he'd done a foolish thing. Since a Customs Bureau salary was high, people called it a "gold rice bowl." Going to work at YMCA, Wu would only receive one-half his Customs Bureau salary, but he was determined to follow Jesus, "not to be served, but to serve people." Wu resolutely cast aside his "gold rice bowl" and joined the YMCA's social service work.

In order to seek and develop the truth, in February 1923 Wu, Bao Guanglin and several colleagues established the Truth Society and published the weekly Truth. In August 1924 he went to the United States to study theology for four years at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and received a masters degree from Columbia University. In September 1927 he returned to Shanghai to work in the National Association of YMCAs' Schools Department.

Ten years later, Wu returned to Union Seminary to study for six months. He returned to Shanghai in May 1937 and changed posts become head of the National Association of YMCAs' publishing house.

Wu did not go abroad to study theology in order to parrot or indiscriminately copy everything from the West. Rather, he saw this as an opportunity to pursue the truth. The Anti-Christian Movement sprang up in 1922 and publications carried many articles exposing the imperialists' use of Christianity as a tool of exploitation. Wu was a sincere Christian and didn't simply echo these sentiments or hastily jump on the bandwagon of protest. Rather, he began to seriously reflect upon and study the contemporary and

historical situation of Christianity. At the time, there were relatively few such cool-headed, objective thinkers among church workers. Most were unequivocally opposed to the Anti-Christian Movement.

Following ten to twenty years' seeking and searching, Wu finally evolved a set of theological views which were fairly acceptable to the educated young people of the day. He also regularly called upon youthful believers to sound a "prophetic voice." A prophet, Wu said, was one who, "Sees what others cannot see, and speaks what others dare not speak." Wu added, "One needn't have a superhuman intellect in order to be a prophet." "Whoever is willing to sincerely listen for God's will, examine things with detachment and boldly state one's understanding of a situation, has the marks of a prophet."

This is all easier said than done. During the era of reactionary Kuomintang control, to "Speak what others dare not speak," was crazy, but Wu not only spoke that way, he acted that way. The editorial direction he set for *Tian Feng* called for a "prophetic voice."

Later, Wu first wrote a simple account of his theological views published as a short volume and followed this with a larger volume entitled *No One Has Ever Seen God*. It was aimed at the young school leavers he had met in and outside the church over a twenty year period. The most prominent question among young intellectuals of the time was the problem of the contradiction between materialism and idealism, or one could say the problem of the contradiction between materialism and Christianity.

Wu's book was first published in November 1943 in the "Christian compendium series" and a few months later as a single volume, and thereafter reprinted several times. While not a lengthy volume, it is a very important theological work. It was intended to witness to school leavers influenced by the latest trends of thought since the May Fourth Movement, that "The invisible God is truly a living God." The author admitted this volume offered "a comparatively new and novel system of thought..." but this system of thought was formed following deep and extensive study and examination of Christianity and scientific materialism.

The author was also aware that some particularly emotional anti-intellectual Christians would probably say the book was muckraking, "the dregs," and heretical. But Wu gave no thought to these people's indifference and hostility. Relying on loving patience he honestly spoke the truth of Christ which he had received. The truth of the spirit of Christianity is vast, no one can say their understanding is exhaustive. He had to wait to have his views respected by others.

For twenty to thirty years, Wu concerned himself with the study and practice of the traditions of the Chinese church, concluding that these are "primarily, British and American church tradition. The thoughts and beliefs of the Chinese church are near carbon copies of the American church." Because of this, in Old China during the decisive period of struggle between contending conservative and progressive forces, the Chinese church was in a lamentable predicament.

In Easter 1948 Wu wrote an article lamenting the tragedy of Christianity during the past hundred years when it had unwittingly become a powerful conservative force which failed to develop any prophetic function. This understanding was the intellectual basis upon which his proposal for a renewal movement in the church rested. But precisely because of this article Wu was severely criticized and attacked politically from many sides, and was particularly pressured by the foreign mission boards. Finally, Wu had no choice but to "resign" his positions as editor and chair of the *Tian Feng* Society.

In April 1949, three months after Shanghai was liberated, Wu wrote an article in the English language *China Weekly Review* entitled "The Christian Renewal Movement." The article pointed out some of the failures of the Chinese church and called for the establishment of an independent church free from foreign control.

After Liberation the Chinese church was faced with the pressing problem of its own future. But Wu was filled with hope for the future of the Chinese church. Earlier in June 1949 he had participated in the Preparatory Meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress. In an interview with reporters he said: "Under the policy of freedom of religious belief in a non-exploitative and non-repressive environment, the church would have even more and greater opportunities to develop."

Wu led in the initiation of the Chinese Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement in 1950, an organization which was to change people's impressions about Christianity and to enable the Chinese church to follow a new path of "true" Christianity. Afterwards, although it met with many difficulties, twists and turns, during the last ten years or so since the downfall of the Gang of Four, the Chinese church has experienced a period of steady advance. Looking back at Chinese Christian experience in this past decade, can we not say, "Even more and greater opportunities for development?"

This vision of Wu's was not a made-up thing. It stemmed from his faith, his unswerving faith in God. Wu believed God was "Creator of all things and Heavenly Lord of all people." During the era which emphasized class struggle as the key link and "putting politics in command," Wu dared to publicly acknowledge, "I'm one who puts faith in command." He said religious belief was not a private matter but was all-encompassing, even including politics.

Wu also told of a conversation he'd had with Li Weihang, then head of the Central United Front Department, in which Wu said he could accept 99.9 per cent of Marxism, but not the Marxists' atheism or their views on the discovery, development and elimination of religion. Therefore Wu believed religion had a bright future. The church's future was not a matter of natural evolutionary development or a question of discovery, development and elimination, because God is eternal.

This was Y. T. Wu's sincere attitude towards the question of faith. He went from unbelief to religious belief, from belief to firm belief in the future of the church and its pure and glorious development. In all this he had no regard for personal safety, success or failure, but gave his all to a prophetic mission.

Wu was similarly sincere and devoid of any deceit in dealing with general socio-political matters. He believed in God's Love. Because of this he advocated practicing "The Gospel of Love" and joined the Chinese branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). Also in 1931 he assumed editorship of the Chinese edition of FOR's quarterly publication *Reconciliation*, which he then changed to a bi-monthly. In the preface of that first issue Wu wrote, "We absolutely refuse to participate in all wars."

But that same year Japan occupied Northeast China in the "September 18th" incident, followed by the "January 28th" incident the next year. The Japanese Occupation Army's cruel treatment of the Chinese people compelled Wu to change his views. He changed from non-support of all war to advocating fighting the Japanese and supported the Non-Cooperation Movement. Wu advocated sympathy for other people's armed resistance against the Japanese and establishment of the National Salvation Front, return of the lost lands of the Northeast, etc. In February 1937 he finally resigned chairmanship of FOR.

Wu's understanding of Communism also went through a period of development. Following the Chinese Communist Party's December 1927 failed armed uprising in Guangzhou, Wu wrote an article asking "Why do the Communists insist on stirring up trouble?" revealing his own anti-Communist stance of the time. In 1932, his attitude already somewhat changed, Wu proposed abolition of the Civil War and opposed the Nationalist Government's military control.

By 1934 he had progressed to the point of being able to see that the Communists were seeking the liberation of the suffering masses and demanding the power to make a thorough change in the social system. He read *Red Star Over China* in 1938 and later had the opportunity to meet Zhou Enlai and other high-ranking Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres. From this Wu gained a much better understanding of the CCP.

In the 1930s Wu participated in the Anti-Japan National Salvation work - up to the 1940s when he threw himself into the Patriotic Democratic Movement. All of this was a fulfillment of the prophetic role, a beautiful witness for Christ in the midst of the Chinese people.

In 1949 Wu was invited to join the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and participated in proclaiming the establishment of the People's Republic of China. During the thirty year period following Liberation, he cooperated with the CCP while daring to speak boldly as a frank friend. Wu deserves special praise in that during the turbulent Gang of Four period he was able to distinguish right from wrong.

Premier Zhou Enlai died 8 January 1976. Wu told a small group of colleagues discussing Zhou's successor, that Wang Hongwen was too young and wouldn't be respected by the people and that Zhang Chunqiao was too ambitious.\* Neither was capable of being Premier.

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\* Wang and Zhang were members of the Gang of Four.

Marshall Zhu De died July 6th the same year. In discussing the problem of who might replace Zhu as Chair of the National People's Congress, Wu again said Zhang Chunqiao was too ambitious. In the dangerous atmosphere of the times, to be able to clearly distinguish right from wrong and dare to speak up was truly "to see what others cannot see and speak what others dare not speak."

Why did Wu handle his relationship with the CCP in such a sincere way? Because on the one hand, from real life situations he gradually saw that the CCP sought to be a liberating force for the toiling masses. On the other hand, from theoretical investigation, Wu discovered the Communist concept of materialism and the Christian belief in God were not in conflict, that even belief in God could include materialism since it was one manifestation of the natural order.

Even so, in the early 1960s, in talking about the problem of his relationship with the CCP Wu said, "My cooperation with the Party for over twenty years should have been of one heart and one mind, but upon examination, there were still problems: first, the matter of individualism; and second, that of religion." Wu said, "in many instances, religious belief causes us to distance ourselves from the Party..." Wu's candor was not strange. In the words of Comrade Luo Zhufeng, who had a long working relationship with Wu, "He was a transparent Christian leader." "Transparent," "without deceit," one who can worship in "spirit and truth" as God desires. Truly, Y.T. Wu's sincere, candid, moral character deserves our emulation.

Of course one can say a rebellious person on a fixed course of action is "transparent." The problem lies with the meaning of "transparent." Wu's "transparency" was obedience to Jesus' teachings. "But strive first for the Kingdom of God, and its righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (cf Mt. 6:33). "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it" (Lk. 9:24).

Wu said, "Those two verses were decisive for my life. For all these years it was these two verses that compelled me to cooperate with the CCP."

Before this, in the early 1940s, Wu had said, "A person who truly believes in God should be forever open-minded in seeking the truth, be obedient to the truth, live for the truth, and die for the truth."

Today as we commemorate the tenth anniversary of Y.T. Wu's death, we recall the words and deeds of his life. We can see clearly he was "A True Israelite," "without deceit," who sincerely and earnestly practiced what he preached.

If only we could also humbly study his "without deceit" moral character and similarly become "transparent" patriotic Christians loved both by God and others.

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Translated by Ewing W. Carroll, Jr.

## **Preface to Selected Lyric Poetry of the Bible - Sun Xiaoping\***

Due to its special relationship to religious faith, the Bible, that "Book of books," has long met with a unique fate in China: on the one hand, it has undergone a process of mystification; on the other, it has been viewed in a utilitarian fashion (these two tendencies exist among believers and non-believers alike; those who for various ideological reasons despise, devalue and even reject the Bible from a nihilist perspective, are outside the scope of our discussion). This being the case, the intrinsic literary value of the Bible goes unnoticed. There is a not inconsiderable number of people in China who possess Bibles, but those who see it as a genuine object of literary appreciation, who truly understand its literary significance, are few. And without an understanding of the Bible's literary significance, one cannot understand western literature, mores, or the larger cultural background.

Hebraic culture and Graeco-Roman culture have been termed the two wellsprings of western culture. But in contrast to ancient Greek culture and philosophy, it has been the fate of the Bible, that assemblage of Hebraic culture, due to its special religious position, to be constantly elevated over the last two or three thousand years, to the point of becoming detached from the ordinary. It has gradually become an object of religious faith, not of literary appreciation. This is even truer of Biblical research.

In terms of literary structure and forms, the elements of the Bible are quite rich and diverse. It includes the essay, lyric poetry, epic poems, proverbs and so on. But in the long course of its evolution and development this "book revealed from heaven," has been the constant object of additions, deletions and revisions for religious purposes. In the Middle Ages its books were divided into chapters which were further divided into verses. Thus at least made it easier to use, but it dealt a damaging blow to the Bible as a literary entity. This is especially true for the poetry of the Bible, most of which became essay-like objects complete with numbered verses, distorted beyond recognition. They were made obscure and the unique parallel form and rhyme of Hebrew poetry was lost.

Under the promptings of rationalism in the nineteenth century, a group of discriminating scholars ignored all sorts of pressures to undertake textual research, criticism and commentary on the Bible. A new branch of scholarship - Biblical criticism - began to take shape in the west. Sub-fields such as Biblical literary criticism and form criticism began the process of correcting and restoring the once-distorted literary forms of the Bible. At the beginning of the present century, editions of the Bible in which the literature was restored to the various forms of poetry, essay, proverbs, and so on were published in the west. In recent years, various editions of the Bible have, for the most part, begun the attempt to restore the Bible to its original form.

When these revised and restored editions appeared on the market, it was as if readers had been handed the key to a literary treasure house whose existence they had long been aware of, but whose doors they had been unable to enter. People were overjoyed and began once again to

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\* Mr. Sun Xiaoping is a non-Christian scholar of Biblical literature.

become acquainted with and ponder ancient Hebrew literature. The value of the Bible as literature became more widely known and appreciated.

For various reasons, the Bible currently popular in China is still the 1907-1919 "Mandarin Union edition," and the poems and essays therein are, of course, as in traditional versions, lumped together and indistinguishable. This has had a serious impact on the appreciation and criticism of Biblical literature among readers in China. The main reason for the publication of the present volume of *Selected Lyric Poetry of 'the Bible* is to attempt to demystify the Bible for Chinese readers and give them the opportunity, insofar as possible, to read with understanding one of the masterpieces of world literature. When this feeling of mystification or sacredness is dispelled, readers will discover that the Bible is a thing of this world and not of another, akin to other masterpieces of world literature such as the epic poetry and tragedy of ancient Greece, the Vedic literature of India and the *Classic of Poetry* and *Annals of the Historian* of China, all products of human hands, aggregations of human spirit and intellect, distillations of human labor.

Twenty-five Biblical lyrics have been selected for inclusion here; in addition to the individual names of the poems, the author has added his own. The division into verses and arrangement on the page is based on the English *Revised Standard Version* (1982). The translations are based on the 1919 Union Version, with slight revisions based on RSV. Though the Union Version is not what one might wish (for example: the text is at times unclear; out-of-date translations of proper names are used; the tongue-twisting translation can make understanding difficult; etc.), its strong points are accuracy of translation and a concise, dignified classical style. To compensate for its deficiencies and help the reader to a deeper understanding, a "glossary of terms" is provided at the back of the present volume for readers' reference. This includes about ninety difficult-to-comprehend terms, arranged by pronunciation. Following each selection, an analysis of the background and literary structure of the poem is given, including both a general introduction and my own opinions gleaned from teaching and research. It is my aim in this to increase the understanding of a reader faced with these poems' unfamiliar background and unique literary forms.

As a young scholar, I am all too aware of my own limitations compared to an earlier generation of Biblical researchers, and hope that they and my fellow scholars will help in rectifying any errors in the present work, in the interests of furthering the progress of scholarship.

Shanghai, March 1988.

Translated by Janice Wickeri.

## **Xu Dishan and the "New Man" in his Fiction - Wang Shu\***

The contemporary Taiwanese author Zhang Xiaofeng once bluntly remarked in an interview:

"... if people feel there is a religious aspect to my plays then I take that as a great honor. As a writer I cannot but express 'myself,' and whatever elements that 'self' contains will inevitably be present in anything I produce. If you look at someone like T.S. Eliot - his every poem and every play are replete with 'Christianity'; in the same way, when you analyze 'me' you find two things - one is 'China,' the other is 'Christianity.'"

This is Zhang Xiaofeng's "creative manifesto." We should not forget, however, that ninety years ago there was another person, who, without making any such proclamation, nevertheless worked quietly and untiringly in the pursuit of similar aims. I am referring to that most individual of twentieth century Chinese writers, one of the founders of the Literary Research Society, Mr. Xu Dishan.

Xu Dishan's brilliance as a scholar is clear for all to see. Much of his brilliance as a writer, however, has been obscured. But irrespective of this, such a singular individual - "neither monk nor man of the common flock, and at the same time both these things" - and the glorious, beautiful works he created - "fossils unique in the history of thought, religion and literature," in the words of Chen Pingyuan - deserve further study. It is sad to recount, therefore, that generations of mainland scholars have neglected this "singular individual," this "unique fossil," probably because of his religious faith. The handful of essays which do discuss him are almost unanimous in their criticism of his religious belief. The prejudice against him is undeniable.

In an essay recalling the writer Lao She, Qian Linsen once remarked: "Any great writer must be unique. A writer's uniqueness is a vital part of what makes him so valuable..." Mr. Xu Dishan was unique, and his uniqueness was based on the faith which he, as a Chinese person, held - he was both Chinese and Christian. Thus, if we are incapable of taking off our politically-colored spectacles, we might just as well be looking at flowers in the mist: there will always be a barrier cutting us off from any real understanding of Xu Dishan. This is because human beings are not merely political or class animals, but also social, religious, ethical and natural beings...

### **1**

Xu Dishan's given name was Zan Kun, style Dishan, pet-name Shuchou. He adopted the pen-name Luo Huasheng ("Groundnut"). He was his parents' fourth child, born on 24 February 1893 in the in the Chengyanping district of Tainan in Taiwan.

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\* Mr. Wang Shu is a graduate student at Nanjing Theological Seminary.

During the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, his father Xu Nanying was the commander in charge of the defense of Tainan. Along with the hero Liu Yongfu, he launched counter-attacks against the invading Japanese forces. When Tainan fell, Xu Nanying fled with his family across the Taiwan Strait to Longxi (Zhangzhou) in Fujian Province. This was in 1895, when Xu Dishan was less than three years old. In 1911, when he was 19, the family's declining fortunes meant that he was forced to fend for himself, and he eventually joined the teaching staff of the Zhangzhou Number Two Teachers' College. In 1913 he took up a teaching post at the Yang Guang Middle School in Burma, where he remained for three years. In 1916 he returned to China to teach at Huaying Middle School in Zhangzhou; at around this time he joined the Fukien London Missionary Society.

After the 1917 summer vacation, he entered the Literature Department of Yanjing University in Beijing, where he continued his studies. He graduated in 1920, and then entered Yanjing Theological Seminary. He was active in the May Fourth Movement, which had begun in 1919, and had no small success in rallying others to the cause. Along with the broad mass of young people of the time, he joined in the onslaught against traditional mores, and the appeal for human liberation. He favored a democratic society in which all would be equal, one which would allow everyone to become fully human. In October of the same year he returned to Zhangzhou to bring his wife Lin Yuesen and their daughter to Beijing. However, Lin Yuesen fell ill en route and died in Shanghai.

In 1921, Xu Dishan was one of the group of twelve writers - including Mao Dun, Zheng Zhenduo, Wang Tongzhao and Ye Shaojun - who initiated the Literary Research Society. At around the same time, a Literary Research Society was also founded at Yanjing University, by Fu Rupei, Xie Bingxin, Li Xugang and others. In 1922 Xu Dishan received his M.Div. from the Seminary and in August 1923 he went to study in the U.S., along with Xie Bingxin and Liang Shiqiu. After obtaining his Masters in Literature at Columbia University, he joined the graduate school of Oxford University in England. In 1927 he returned to his alma mater, Yanjing, as assistant lecturer in the Department of Literature. On 1 May 1929 he married Zhou Housong, and the following year he was promoted to Professor.

From 1935 on he served as Professor and Head of the Chinese Department at Hong Kong University. During his time in Hong Kong he worked energetically in his post, and was also active in social and cultural activities, throwing himself into the Anti-Japanese National Salvation Movement. As Rev. Zhang Zhuling recounts, he also "regularly attended services at the Hop Eat Church on Sundays, where he frequently preached, spreading the marvelous tidings of the gospel." On the night of 28 July 1941, he suffered a heart-attack, the result of over-work, and at 2pm on 4 August his heart beat its last. He was forty-nine. On the afternoon of 5 August, his remains were buried in the Chinese Protestant Cemetery in Pokfulam Road in Hong Kong.

Throughout his life, Xu Dishan's prime interest was academic research, particularly into Taoist practice and thought. He spent only a brief period writing creatively, and his output was relatively small. Nevertheless, students of his works are almost unanimous in their agreement that their originality of subject matter and style make them unique in the history of modern Chinese literature. He also wrote a significant body of Christian works, and like Timothy Lew

Tingfang, T.C. Chao, Hsieh Fu-ya, Yang Yinliu, Jia Yuming, Yang Jingqiu and others, he wrote hymn lyrics.

Lao She first met Xu Dishan in 1920 at a church in Beijing, where they were both members of the evangelistic group of the YMCA. When they were in London they became quite close and spent quite a lot of time together. It was Xu Dishan who, in 1924, urged Lao She to write his novel *Old Zhang's Philosophy*, and persuaded the magazine *Fiction Monthly* to publish it. However, human understanding has its limitations and it can be difficult to see someone, even a friend, in a truly objective light. In "Obituary of Xu Dishan," Lao She wrote "I don't believe that he had any religious faith, despite his profound study of religion. However, nor would I dare proclaim that religion had no influence on him at all." This would probably be quite an appropriate description of Lao She himself, but is clearly unreasonable and historically inaccurate when applied to Xu Dishan.

In fact - despite the fact that the Buddhist beliefs of his childhood continue to influence him - from the moment he joined the Fukien London Missionary Society in 1916, Xu Dishan was to retain his Christian faith for the rest of his life. Regardless of whether he was, as Chen Pingyuan believes, "a Christian on the surface but a Buddhist underneath," or whether, as Xue Sui believed, religious faith for XU Dishan, due to his cultural upbringing, was not "expressed as crude ideology" but as a "cultivated philosophical attitude," one thing is beyond doubt - that in his later years he did not move from "the empty to the substantial," or from "religion to reality," as some critics have claimed, but rather "continued to be influenced by Christianity." Even in his speeches and essays in support of the war of resistance (against Japan), he makes clear use of Christian thought. Even as the hand of death clutched at his throat, he still calmly told his family, "I am going to Heaven." From these words, uttered on the verge of death, we get a clear glimpse of his Christian faith. His faith at the end of his life as well as his words and actions throughout his life all helped him on his way to heaven.

Xu Dishan's close friend, Rev. Zhang Zhuling of the Hop Yat Church in Hong Kong said, in "Recalling Professor Xu Dishan": "Mr. Xu Dishan was a Christian and a scholar, a leader of the people who stood at their head. He was also one who took responsibility for social reform... He was a friend of the Fukien London Missionary Society, and member of the Hop Yat Church..." And in his sermons there, he "often cited his *personal religious experience*," (author's emphasis). He could always be relied on to join in, advise on and enthusiastically direct the Church's special gatherings, music services and drama performances." So it is clear that in his later years he not only retained his faith and participated in Sunday services, but also played an active role in the daily life of the church. According to Zhang Zhuling, while he was studying theology in London, Xu Dishan suffered a "particular, profound upset which was at the root of a change in direction of his professional aspirations. It's only fortunate that this did not affect his faith." Though there is now no way of knowing what this upset was, the fact that even something so profound could not shake his Christian convictions reveals just how firmly founded these were.

If one denies Xu Dishan's consistent faith in Christianity, Xu Dishan becomes a different person. For it was on the basis of this very faith in Christianity that he was able, starting from a unique angle of vision, to sketch his ideal new person - a Chinese-style Christian or, we might say, a Chinese person with Christian characteristics - and to contribute this new person to the era in which he lived. Regardless of whether these actions proved of any value to the times, no one can doubt the sincerity of his intentions.

## 2

In the early 1930s, Shen Congwen wrote a book entitled *The Story of Mo Mo*. One chapter dealt with "Mr. Groundnut." At the end of the chapter, Shen Congwen stated his opinion that it was inevitable that Xu Dishan would gradually be forgotten by the world, because there was an "evident dichotomy" between his temperament and the age the youthful vitality of the age would force the writer and his works into an obscure corner. "Dusk fills your face, of course you will forget this song." This is evidently a misinterpretation: in my opinion, if Shen Congwen had written *The Story of Mo Mo* ten years later, he would probably have had something different to say about Mr. Groundnut. In the thirties, Shen Congwen himself said: "Though it is naturally the case that this writer could easily be forgotten, there are reasons why he should not be." He felt that the outstanding beauty of Mr. Groundnut's essays was one such reason. But the real reason why Mr. Groundnut cannot and will not be forgotten lies not only in the outstanding beauty of his essays, or in the exquisite voice of the singer, but in a whole deeper range of factors. People will always remember and cock their ears for his song; his constant searching spirit has ensured that he will not be one of those singers who are simply forgotten.

The American literary critic Allen Tate has said that it is the responsibility of a writer in the modern world to: "create anew an image of man for the times in which he lives; he must also promote standards by which other people can evaluate this image, so that they can judge between the genuine and the fake." Like Ba Jin, Lao She Bing Xin and others, Xu Dishan sought to mould the image of a new man for his age in accordance with his own ideals and knowledge. His image of the new man was formed at the confluence of Chinese and western cultures; it was a product of the clash of two cultures and two faiths. It represented his gift to his age - regardless of its actual significance, an act of such love will never sour. Maybe this, after all, is the real reason that Xu Dishan will not be forgotten.

Everyone chooses their way of life according to their own criteria, and writers too mould their model personality in accordance with their own ideals and perceptions. In *The Family*, Ba Jin created a new type of person in Gao Jue, the superfluous man standing on the fault-line between history on the one hand and east/west ideas on the other. The images of the new person designed by the poet Bing Xin, meanwhile, are without exception marked by "the philosophy of love." The "model heroes" in Lao She's writing are inseparable from his own temperament and from his own Christian viewpoint. Xu Dishan had his own opinions, and in a spirit of seeking common cultural ground, he sought to make himself open, to embrace humankind, to turn his own thought into a

"hundred-flower garden" where there would be a place for everything. In this hundred-flower garden, he strove to design his ideal new man. His image of the new man is less than completely heroic, without the slightest hint of "superfluosness," like a flower or a blade of grass, his sweet fragrance is released by love's watering. On the surface plain and tiny, he is in fact tall and beautiful, an ordinary superman, a weak strongman, a non-violent warrior. This is the "new man" Xu Dishan offered his age - a Chinese-style Christian, a Christianized Chinese person, perfectly ordinary yet giving off a lasting fragrance.

Such a quest and such a pattern are inseparable from the education he received at home and from his Christian faith. Belief in Christianity led him to design a "man" based on the meaning of *existence*, to liberate humankind from the "inhuman" conditions of the times, to enable humanity to radiate a sense of Christ-like love, forgiveness and seeking. Coming from a patriotic family, the voice of family upbringing, and the traditional philosophy heard and observed there, made it impossible for him to abandon his motherland. (Mr. Lei in Xu's story "The Iron Fish's Gills" is a perfect exemplification of this. He prefers to die rather than leave his own land.) And so he could not do otherwise than concentrate all his energies and emotions in designing a "patriotic" Chinese person. Even if it meant weeping as he sang, singing as he wept, this singer could not reconcile himself to giving up. His suffering and his tears of blood had a double meaning, representing both a spiritual burden and a carefully chosen foundation. Xu Dishan and his "new men" alike took courage from their faith and threw down their spiritual burdens, singing odes of love amidst all the suffering and the tears of blood. They kept faith with the choice they had made and lived bravely and actively, in spite of the circumstances. The various characters in his stories - Xi Guan, Shang Jie, Yu Guan, Chen Qing, Chun Tao, Mr. Dong Ye and Mr. Lei - all experience "love's pain." Unperturbed, they silently endure life's hardships and love's pain, for they are emissaries of the light and messengers of love. As Xu puts it, their task is "to bring light to those in darkness, a cure for those who are ill, and release to those with heavy hearts."

Xu Dishan lived in an age of enlightenment and awakening. China's defeat in the Opium War, the failure of the Westernization Movement in the late nineteenth century, the bloody memory of the suppression of the Hundred Days Reforms in 1898, the less-than-complete 1911 revolution - all of these inspired a group of progressive intellectuals, spurred on by their fervent desire to rescue the nation and its people, to begin investigating the key question relating to the modernization of China: the question of "man." Whether, as for Chen Duxiu and others, human nature was seen as the basis of national salvation, or whether, as for those like Cai Yuanpei, education was the key, all such theories centered on the problem of remoulding "man." This undoubtedly had a great influence on Xu Dishan. China's greatest modern writer, Lu Xun, who "with bowed head, willingly acted as an ox for the people," raised the question of people's self-renewal even more sharply: "The first task is to make man stand upright; after man has stood upright, then everything else can be raised up. In practice, this means respecting individuality and encouraging spiritual development."

During the May Fourth era, serious thinkers in all fields were unanimous in the belief that Chinese ways of thinking and ideas were out-moded, and the cultural level of the people particularly so. They therefore raised high the banner of Man, hoping to reshape society through human self-renewal. As a writer of conscience in such an era, Xu Dishan had to confront this issue in modeling his ideal "new man." The "new men" he created were more or less typical Chinese people, but all bore the stamp of Christianity. Xi Guan, Shang Jie, Mr. Lei, Mr Dong Ye, Chen Qing - without exception, their words and deeds have a Christian flavor.

Even in his first longer work of fiction, *Ming Ming the Bird*, it is easy to spot the internal Christian influences in the character of the Buddhists Jia Lu and Min Ming. The passage in which Jia Lu and Min Ming walk hand in hand into Lake Luqi is particularly beautifully written: they are "as comfortable as if they were going into a cave dwelling, without the slightest shrinking back." Jia Lu says: "We are travelers through life. (A Christian concept is clearly being used here.) Now that we're about to enter that new world, I'm really so happy." I would go so far as to say that the implied meaning of this would be intolerable to Buddhists.

The beautiful writing cannot conceal the strong spirit of martyrdom; only such a spirit could bring them to face death with such calmness, to see it as a path to a new world. Jia Lu says: "I don't shed a tear for the world; because of you, I want to walk with you." This is "martyrdom for love," a search for a "new world" for which they are prepared to sacrifice everything. Surely this represents Xu's own attitude, surely this is also the spirit of Christianity. Jesus said: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it (lies, it bears much fruit" (Jn. 12:24). Xu Dishan, too accomplished human transformation by overcoming death. In the sane way, his characters, whether by their own physical or spiritual deaths or the deaths of others, transform themselves and others, and thereby society.

In Xu's works, death becomes an indispensable concept, but it is important to realize that "death" is not the same as "destruction." It is the Christian viewpoint that without death there is no life, and this was one of the ideas which shaped Xu Dishan's own thinking. Death without destruction is also a kind of eternal life, and this is another reason why Xu Dishan and his "new men" will not be forgotten.

"I want to be the salt that brings out the flavor, and slip into all kinds of food; I want my own body to melt, to return to how it was in the sea, so that all sentient creatures will taste the saltiness, but not see the salt." (from *Light Drizzle in Lonely Hills*) Xu not only put this into practice in his own life, but designed his "new man" in this way. This "Proclamation by the Sea-shore," is really a footnote to the Sermon on the Mount. In Paul's words: "... always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies... So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4: 10-12) It seems that Xu Dishan had mastered this secret. Surely one could see this insistence on sentient beings tasting the saltiness of the salt without being aware of the salt itself as akin to suppressing the "self" but allowing the fragrance of Christ to be disseminated? This explains, from a different angle, the principle of life and death. Xu

Dishan, and the characters he depicts, silently but unflaggingly act on this "Proclamation by the Sea-shore." "People should be useful," he writes, "not great and respectable." The essence of this "Groundnut"-style spirit, and of the spirit of "The Proclamation by the Sea-shore" can be condensed into the maxim of "sacrificing oneself for others," which forms the substance of human life. Through continual fermentation, these concepts are transformed into the life blood which courses through Xu Dishan himself and his characters.

The age Xu Dishan lived in, his upbringing and his Christian faith, made it impossible for his ideal human being to be a "fake foreign devil" (i.e. a totally westernized Chinese person) or a thorough-going traditional Confucian scholar. In the 1930s Mao Dun considered Xu Dishan a skeptic who could not possibly be religious, yet his characters are all in some way related to religion. In the 1980s Chen Pingyuan suggested that Xu Dishan was influenced by Christianity but tended to make superficial use of it, often simply using Christian images to express Buddhist thought: in other words, at their core, he feels the emotional flavor of Xu Dishan's words and actions is Buddhist rather than Christian.

These are the critics' personal interpretations; there is no need for us to discuss whether they are right or wrong. Nevertheless, all of them discuss but one aspect, the influence of Christianity on Xu Dishan. One could argue that Christianity and traditional culture (Buddhist thought included) are the two elements which make up the philosophical background of Xu Dishan's design for his "new man." He certainly did not completely betray his traditional cultural roots -thus "Chinese people" appear throughout his works. Nor did he stake Christian imagery the mere servant of Buddhist thought (the opposite would seem more the case, in fact)-thus we constantly pick up the scent of Christians in his works. He was the "surgeon" who grafted together Christianity and China, Christians and Chinese people, using love as a "glue."

And besides simply planning his "new man," he was a perfect example himself. His 1934 hymn "This Land You Gave Us Lord" (*Hymns of Universal Praise*, No. 288, Hong Kong edition) is a typical expression of the search and the fervent prayers which dominated his life. In this hymn God is the God of the Chinese people and China is his chosen land. The poem beseeches God to grant our people "an easy life ... equality and freedom ... faith, virtue, wisdom, and uninterrupted progress." This is a Chinese faith; these are Chinese prayers. This is the voice of a Chinese Christian.

Based on these ideas, Xu Dishan felt that: "Religion ought to lead people to accept their responsibility to emphasize the good and the spiritual in their dealings with society and individuals. This has nothing to do with heaven or hell - believers should not do good deeds simply to escape hell's punishments, nor refrain from wicked deeds simply because they covet heaven's blessings." Therefore he poured Jesus' love, forgiveness, patience and reconciliation into human life, doing all he could to reconstruct a set of spiritual values for the age, and mould a model of an ideal human personality. In contrast with most writers of the time, who were caught up on a real level with class concepts of rich and poor, and who tended uniformly to emphasize revolutionary struggle, Xu Dishan cast his vision on the broader and more

profound level of human nature, measuring the human heart by the holy yardstick of good and evil and seeking to renew human nature by a making a religion of human ethics. This transformation, by which religion becomes the moral standard, overreached his times, and so it is no wonder that Xu Dishan was so easily forgotten by the writers and readers of his day. Most of his works undeniably lack realism, but the emphasis on moulding a man of holy moral qualities, the mood of pilgrimage, the holiness and transcendence they possess, is difficult to overlook. For this very reason, even though he and his song of the "new man" may have been temporarily forgotten, they will not remain so.

### 3

"I am you, and you are me.  
Others divide us in two,  
they've got their fingers over their eyes.  
That's why they make this mistake.  
You shouldn't look at it with their eyes.  
You must know that I am you, and you are me."

The "Peacock's Song" which Min Ming sings in *Ming Ming the Bird* speaks of the union of love; of how, in love, two people become one. But could this perhaps have a more profound meaning? Could Xu Dishan be using Min Ming's song to express his own ideals and goals - i.e. bringing Christianity and China, Christians and Chinese people into an "I am you and you are me" relationship through the injection of a holy love? C.T. Hsia considers that Xu Dishan used a "dual yardstick" to assess his characters, the dual measures being that of a Chinese person and that of a Christian, and that for the writer the two were inseparable. The characters he created, whether Christianized Chinese or sinicized Christians, all conform completely to the moral standards of both sides of the yardstick. The behavior of the former group does not contravene traditional morality, while that of the latter group fits in with the moral values of Christianity.

In *The Merchant's Wife*, Xi Guan becomes Lin Yingqiao's wife at the age of sixteen, and the two love each other dearly. Subsequently Lin Yingqiao loses everything gambling, and has to go to Singapore to make a living. As his business gradually takes off, he marries again, to a Malay woman, breaking his promise to Xi Guan, who hears no more news of him. Xi Guan carries on with her calm, dutiful existence, until finally she sails across the sea in search of her husband. She is a typical example of a Chinese woman, chaste and honest, but her cold-hearted husband sells her, and she leads an unhappy, loveless life as the wife of an Indian Muslim. When her second husband (lies, she abandons the wealth she has inherited, and, undercover of darkness, runs away. She follows the morning star (a symbol of the light of Christianity) to Elizabeth's home where she and the other Christians meet, and there she finally devotes herself to God.

Having passed through the valley of death, she begins a brand new life: as a result of her faith and constant study, the old ignorant, repressed Xi Guan has "died," and a new Xi Guan has arisen. Her love for God gives her life substance. It does not, however, change her love for her former husband - she does not bear him any grudge, but sets off to

Singapore to look for him again, in the merciful and holy love of Christ. Though she does not find her husband, we seem to hear, from beyond the text, the news of their reconciliation. As a Chinese woman, it seems she cannot leave her husband; as a Christian, she vows to retrieve the lost pearl that her husband represents.

This story seems to be a Chinese version of the story of Joseph in Genesis. Xi Guan's experiences are very similar to his. But the writer was not attempting to give a sinicized explanation of the Bible story - in Xi Guan he has ultimately created an image of a Chinese Christian. She lives for a long time in a Muslim environment, and even appears to become an Indian, but later she becomes a Christian again and she remains Chinese at heart, unable to forget Chinese traditional morality and the language of her homeland.

Shang Jie (*The Hardworking Spider Mends its Web*) has the qualities of a typical Chinese woman, and also the benevolence and forgiving spirit of a Christian. While, in true Chinese fashion, she suffers all trials in silence, and abides strictly by Chinese morality, she still searches constantly for some value in life, as a Christian must. Because Kewang is kind to her, she becomes his wife. However, Kewang groundlessly considers her to have been unchaste, and speaks ill of her in the church. Later, Shang Jie rescues a cat-burglar who fell off a wall, and Kewang, misunderstanding, flies into a rage and stabs her with a knife. With the aid of their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Shi, she escapes to a small island in the Indian Ocean and lives with the pearl fishers, seeking her own lost pearl, silently suffering life's pains, and enjoying the calmness of love. With the help of the Rev. Worthington, Kewang finally recognizes his sin and initiates a reconciliation with Shang Jie. Through the witness of her own love, she has not only found twenty or thirty pearls of life, but has found Kewang, the lost sheep, as well. Kewang has "died," and been reborn. This is the significance of the kind of love Shang Jie possesses. This non-violent soldier, this weak strong-woman has not only won the battle with Kewang, but has actually recreated him.

When Peter denied the Lord three times, Jesus did not rebuke him, but gazed at him full of compassion. Jesus' most powerful interference in Peter's behavior was to make him rectify his mistake himself - this was the only way to make him experience inner suffering. This produced a strong spiritual strength which utterly transformed his soul, saving him from doubt and wavering, and establishing a new relationship between him and Jesus. Shang Jie does the same. Her loving act causes Kewang to take responsibility for himself, straighten himself out, and request a new harmony between them. At the same time as Xu Dishan created Shang Jie, an image of Christian love and forgiveness, he created Kewang. Both Shang Jie and Kewang are still thoroughly Chinese. They think in a Chinese way, speak in a Chinese way, and the same can be said of some of their actions.

Xu Dishan never completely denied the innate goodness of human nature, as Kewang's name, which means "hopeful" suggests. Kewang can be moulded, all people can be moulded. This is a reflection of the traditional Chinese theory of human goodness, and is also revelatory of the Christian theology of human original sin and goodness. Despite his belief that evil is deep-rooted in the Chinese people, Xu Dishan still sees hope for them, and the path to this hope lies in the Christianization of the Chinese people. This path will be completed through the efforts of many millions of Shang Jie's (the meaning of the name is "sublime holiness"):

"This is solving the problem of existence in an unjust world through spiritual, rather than materialist or revolutionary methods." This kind of forgiving love is the spirit in which Christians treat other people, and in this there exists a giant redemptive force.

The eponymous hero of Xu Dishan's novel *Yu Guan*, which was published posthumously in 1941, can be seen as a perfect typification of a Chinese Christian. Like *Xi Guan* and *Shang Jie*, not only is *Yu Guan* a Chinese Christian, but her every thought and action are informed by a background of sinicized Christianity. Wherever she travels, she carries the Bible in one hand and the *I-Ching* in the other. Through this typified, symbolic description, Xu Dishan seems to have found a point of contact for Christians and Chinese people, somewhere between the Bible and the *I-Ching*. The two cultures, finally, are fused into one, without clashing. Although there is a clash within *Yu Guan* herself before her great awakening, it is not the clash of two cultures, but the clash of the soul and the flesh in a naive Chinese Christian.

*Yu Guan* is a young Fukienese woman and a very traditional one - simple, stubborn and unaffected. After being baptized as a Christian, she overcomes the self through her transformation and renewal of her soul, and devotes herself to the task of spreading the word and bringing the love of Jesus to others. In this way she gets rid of her halo and becomes a real-life, thoroughly typical example of a Chinese saint. Like *Shang Jie*, *Yu Guan*'s highest ideal is to be loyal to herself and to God; that is, to be loyal to Chinese people and to God, and thus her honesty in no way goes against her Chineseness or against Chinese morality. All of these characters are searching for a common good in the combination of Chinese people and Christians, searching for something which can truly save humankind.

*Yu Guan* is a complex but lovable person: for a start, she gives up on her own ambitions and holds herself in mourning for her late husband largely because she places her hopes on her son attaining a respectable position and then erecting a memorial arch to her chastity. With financial assistance from the church, her son goes abroad to study. When he returns he abandons his original aim to become a preacher and takes an official post in the government. *Yu Guan*'s initial pleasure soon turns to pain for she cannot bear this "new-style life"; for an ordinary Chinese woman, her son and his wife's westernized lifestyle are utterly foreign and impossible to accept. Finding it very hard to get along with them, she returns to her family home in Fujian, where she begins to genuinely see the light, and realizes that everything she did before (including evangelism) was mere vanity. After her awakening, she starts a genuine new life. She no longer preaches for the sake of empty glory, but evangelizes out of love and begins to do practical things for the people in the countryside, using her personal transformation as her witness to the gospel of love.

This represents a personal, individual transformation made by one Chinese person thanks to God's love - a new life containing the promise of resurrection. In the end *Yu Guan* changes completely, from an utterly vain Chinese person to one who truly belongs to Jesus. All her virtues and weak-points considered, *Yu Guan* really is a typical example of a traditional Chinese woman. Even before her final awakening, no matter what ethical standards we use to judge her, she must be considered to be a very good person. "She is an evangelist, and so it is natural for the writer (Xu Dishan) to use religious standards of good and bad to evaluate her. The important thing, however, as Fu Zhiqing notes, is that "in the novel, this religious

perspective never replaces the moral standards which Chinese people have always observed." This is the result of Xu Dishan's striving to maintain a balance. He has no wish to replace one side with the other; his idea is to find a balance in love. This in itself is not important - the key is that, in complete parallel with his characters, he has to spread his goodness to the wider world, to practically extend it into his love and his work.

Xi Guan, Shang Jie and Yu Guan all, as a result of the less than perfect humanity of society as a whole, and people's lack of spirituality, silently suffer the trials of life for along period of time. However. "It is where suffering exists that we can accurately deal with that suffering, by seeking God's purpose in it, thus allowing God to transform our suffering into a way of life, making it serve our life." Seeking God's purpose; praying that people will be made holy in themselves; sowing the seeds of love and goodness - these are the pillars of the lives of these Chinese Christians. In the fires of suffering they have tempered and purified their souls, in the hell of suffering they have chanted the songs of love. In suffering to overcome, in overcoming to attain perfection, in perfection to serve. In their hearts they carry the souls of an infinite number of people living in sin - they have vowed to serve this infinite number of souls and retrieve the pearls of their lives.

In these characters, Xu Dishan achieved his mission of transforming religion into an ethical system. Xi Guan, Shang Jie, and Yu Guan may be pure Christians, but their words and actions never fail to conform to the traditional ethics and morality of the Chinese people. Xu Dishan's message seems to be: true Christian faith will not turn Chinese people into Westerners. It is definitely not a case of "one more Christian, one less Chinese." Thus, if we analyze the characters he depicts by Chinese standards, they are all "good people"; by Christian standards, they are all "good Christian people." This Christianized Chinese represents Xu Dishan's ideal character.

#### 4

Please sir do not fret, unfurrow your vexed brow;  
How I wish that all the tears of blood, all the sweat,  
Would fade into dry traces as soon as they are scattered,  
Just like raindrops.

In "The Phoenix Which Changed its Nest" quoted above, Xu Dishan used the song of the phoenix to express his own "spring-rain" - like spirit of self-sacrifice for the good of others. He Luan is not a Christian, but the song she sings on the author's behalf clearly reflects the Christian spirit of universal love and self-sacrifice. Jesus has said: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Christianity emphasizes self-sacrifice for the sake of others, and in this case Xu Dishan speaks through a non-Christian Chinese to voice just such an idea. Does it not seem that this "spirit of the spring-rain," like "the spirit of the Groundnut," represents a paean to this kind of self-sacrifice? Xu Dishan was such a skilled writer that, apart from using Chinese-style Christians to express the Christian spirit of universal love, forgiveness and self-sacrifice, he was also capable of making a non-Christian Chinese person express the same ideas. (Admittedly this non-Christian Chinese person had already gone through a certain Christianization at the hands of the writer.) In contrast to the Chinese-style Christians, who represent the transformation of

religion into an ethical system - i.e., making religion more worldly - these latter represent the transformation of the ethical system by religion, i.e., turning the worldly into the religious. The former shows itself externally - progressing from internal to external - while the latter is internal - a progression from external to internal. But regardless of this, they both represent an expression of Xu Dishan's idealized human character. The sinified Christian and the Christianized Chinese person are the two basic forms of human character which he depicts.

In Xu Dishan's works, there are actually very few true Christians; however, the vast majority of his characters, while not Christians in name, nevertheless undeniably conform to Christian ethics in their words and deeds. (They are even prepared to contravene human morality in order to conform to divine morality). Karl Rahner's term "hidden Christians" is entirely appropriate here. This reflects another aspect of Xu Dishan's design for Chinese people; i.e., to merge the Christian spirit into the thought of the Chinese people. The result of this is that, though his characters are not, in name, Christians, the light of Christianity is immediately evident in them. Their every word and action generally adhere to the norms of Christian thought. This is inseparable from his theory of saving humanity through education, and the influence of the concept of universal love as supreme. In the process of making an ethical system out of religion, he emphasizes the enormous benefits of education; in the making a religion of ethics, he holds up the idea of universal love as supreme.

In his book *Double-Edged Sword*, Lewis S. Robinson writes: "To Xu Dishan, it made not the slightest difference whether or not Jesus was God's only son. What profoundly affected him was what Jesus was inwardly." Inevitably, as with many thinkers and theologians in the Christian world, the wave of liberal theology then sweeping the West had a not inconsiderable impact on Xu Dishan. Thus we note that he considered Jesus' lofty human nature to have greater importance than his divine nature, a major divergence from traditional Christian faith. Xu Dishan was not particularly concerned with traditional forms of faith, or with religious tenets and doctrines. He laid much greater emphasis on using the light of Jesus' sublime soul to dispel the darkness in the hearts of the Chinese people and light up the infinite number of lost souls in China's vast land, and on using Jesus' noble moral nature to move and awaken the souls lost to sin. For this reason, those characters who are "ordinary Chinese with a Christian spirit" are, for Chinese people, probably easier to relate to than the Christians, and have a greater impact in educating them to reform themselves. This is a sign of how much care the writer put into his work.

Shao Ci in "The Liberator," Dong Ye in "Mr. Dong Ye," Chen Qing in "Man or not Man," and others are not Christians, yet it is easy to discern Christian qualities in them. It would, in fact, be just as appropriate to judge their actions using Christian ethical standards - indeed some of their actions conform only to the divine and not to the human at all. Via these characters, Xu Dishan attempts to internalize Christian moral conduct and the loving heart so that they become a concept of life for Chinese people. Herman Hesse once said, "My friend, you should not long for some perfect, flawless theory, you should long for yourself to be perfect and flawless. Divinity lies not in any concept or book, but only in you yourself. The truth lies in practice and not in

teaching." Just like Xi Guan, Shang Jie and Yu Guan, these characters for whom religion is an ethical system are not depicted as perfect or flawless, but they all practice and preach the truth of Christianity's universal love, and silently practice holiness in their own persons.

Shao Ci is an ordinary policeman in a county town in the north of China; he is blessed with a Christ-like desire to save others, and is not afraid to sacrifice possessions and even his life in doing so. He even tries to save a lost lamb, perhaps symbolic of a lost soul. In the end, he drowns tragically in a clump of reeds while trying to save someone, because that person does not understand him. Shao Ci represents the kind of Jesus-image which would be easy for Chinese to understand.

Although Mr. Dong Ye does not sacrifice his life to save others, he nevertheless resembles Shao Ci in trying to express love to all sentient creatures. He likes to help others - if anyone asks him for assistance, or if he sees anyone who he thinks needs money, he always provides it. He is an average primary-school teacher-kind, honest, upright. Out of religious love he brings up the orphaned child of a political martyr, and does everything he can to find the child's relatives. He is most sympathetic towards others: he helps the wonton-seller whose family are in difficulties; when, on the execution ground, he sees the mutilated corpses of female revolutionary party members, he curses the soldiers who shot them and the pitiless spectators as "lacking in all humanity and human sympathy," and buys cloth to wrap up their bodies, for which action he is beaten half dead. Dong Ye is an ordinary, insignificant person, yet his life becomes most meaningful through his construction of a set of humanistic spiritual values for his age, his willingness to defend them with his life, and his earnest attempt to transform the pitiful, compassionless "selfish, spectator mentality" of the Chinese people. Such an active approach to life is for Xu Dishan undoubtedly the product of sanctifying the world. In the person of Dong Ye too we can find the image of Jesus Christ.

The sanctification of the worldly characters Xu Dishan depicts can, in the same way, be judged with the dual value-yardstick referred to above. In fact, some of them can only be effectively evaluated with this dual yardstick (Chen Qing and Chun Tao, for example). Shao Ci and Dong Ye's actions do not go against common ethics and morality, yet also conform to the ethics and morality of Christianity. Chen Qing and Chun Tao however, are exceptions-their Christianity is hidden, yet more pronounced. From the standpoint of popular ethical values, they are "bud" people. If, however, one judges them from a Christian ethical standpoint, the conclusion is quite the reverse.

Chen Qing is an average worker in a government bureau who, in order to support the family of a political martyr, has no choice but to sell her body, to submit to a sub-human life. From a popular ethical standpoint she is less than human, she is the dregs of society. But from the standpoint of Christian morality, she is selling her body not for her own sake but in order to practice love in the absolute sense of the word: thus she is a human in the true meaning of the word, and proves, in an 'inhuman' manner, the existence of the human. What can be more valuable or more magnificent than sacrificing oneself to save others? In the eyes of Jesus Christ, Chen Qing would certainly receive greater praise than any flamboyant providers of charity.

The French writer Maupassant wrote a story called "Boule de Suif" (Ball of fat) - about a prostitute, the butt of derision and rough treatment, who becomes an admirable person through circumstance. When she and her companions are travelling by cart they encounter a band of attackers; the people of France, who had previously mocked her, are completely helpless - she alone dares to come forward, and saves the whole cartload of people with her body. This expresses her moral courage and devotion to her people. In the same way, Chen Qing is dirt in the eyes of the world, the butt of mockery; yet in God's eyes she is pure and holy, and worthy of approval. Selling sex contravenes Christian ethics, and is also prohibited by worldly ethics, but in this case the spiritual value of absolute love which lies behind this action must be noted. Chen Qing's true greatness lies in the fact that she is prepared to sacrifice herself for an absolute spiritual value. In comparison with her falsely moralistic superiors and colleagues, Chen Qing is undoubtedly much closer to the kingdom of God.

Yang Mu feels that "Most of the time, Xu Dishan, like some conscientious preacher, used proverb and symbolism to inspire our love, faith, courage and wisdom. He was not one of those preachers who stand on some elevated holy pedestal, but one who was constantly moving about among us." Regardless of whether it was a matter of making an ethical system of religion or of the transformation of ethics by religion, the characters Xu Dishan described, despite not being Christians in name, implemented Christianity in practice just as he himself did. Whether they were Christians or not, they were all thoroughly Chinese, just like the writer, even if the traces of Christian influence on them were ineradicable...

## 5

Poet!

Treasure what you write!

It's your job to comfort

The frustrations of the masses.

- Bing Xin: Spring Water, No. 19.

Amidst the clatter of his fellow men constructing new walls, Xu Dishan quietly got on with planning his own "new man," in an attempt to comfort the tormented masses and construct a new living environment. Regardless of the actual results of his efforts, or of the actual impact of his new person, his spirit of striving, his good intentions, generous desire to sacrifice himself for the benefit of others and his holy compassion for others, are all, without question, worthy of praise. He had a profound understanding that "what pushed his fellow men to become, in material terms, oxen and horses, was the fact that they did not know how to love others like themselves - but that though this was pathetic and despicable, it was still not as bad as those people who in their own souls had turned into pigs and dogs because they did not know how to love themselves as they would other people; this is the most tragic of all."

Therefore, he proposed a spirit of loving others as oneself and propagated the moral virtue of universal love, in order to make other people become human. Furthermore he proposed loving oneself as a human, in the true sense of the word, in order to become human oneself, in order to find a meaningful existence. In just the same way as his "new men," he strove to answer the question of how to be human. The humanism he expounded is still worthy of our endorsement today.

As for the new men he created, their influence on their own age does not appear to have been great, because of certain surreal aspects to their characterization. As regards their expounding of holy love, of sympathy and forgiveness, none of these are bound by time. Perhaps his "new men" were too simple and naive for a revolutionary tin but in an era of construction such as ours, love and forgiveness can seem more important. As Xu wrote, "people who seek for love must, in the end, find love within themselves." Looked at from this perspective, we cannot just sum up Xu Dishan in terms such as innocent, naive, simple. He was truly seeking something over and above the limitations of his age - this singer never gave up singing odes to love and sacred spiritual values. Life never rests, the chanting never cease!

Consequently, if we wish to come to a complete and objective understanding of his importance and value, we must await the favor of Old Father Time. As Frazer said in *The Golden Bough*: "... What will be the color of the web which the Fates are now weaving on the humming loom of time? Will it be white or red? We cannot tell. A faint glimmering light illumines the backward portion of the web. Clouds and thick darkness hide the other end." Even today, we cannot necessarily make a definitive evaluation of Xu Dishan and his "new men," but the day will come when "the background of this woven mat of thought" will come fully into the light, and the clouds will fade gradually away, until not a trace remains. Time is not only the most effective prescription for healing wounds, it is also an indispensable remedy for forgetfulness. What has not been wounded does not require treatment, what ought to be forgotten does not require a remedy. As for those who cannot be forgotten, we should never forget our gratitude to them. In fact, this is how it ought to be - let what ought to be forgotten be forgotten, for there will always be someone who remembers that which deserves remembering. There is no need for us to say anything - God and Old Man History will see that justice is done!

*Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 13 (2/1990), pp. 106-117; slightly abridged.  
Translated by Duncan Hewitt.

## Letter to Qiaonan Village - Wang Sanyuan\*

I wrote this to the Christians in Qiaonan Village in 1977, at a time of inner weakness and external trials when my heart was broken and filled with pain.

- Author

Dear brothers and sisters:

I'm unable to be with you now, so I am sending you this letter to let you know about my situation. Sister Dao Zhen can tell you more. I feel, too, that it's unnecessary to say too much, for our ability to speak out the word of God comes not from how many sermons we've heard, but from what sort of love we have for him in our hearts. If our hearts are cold, our spiritual life will be weak, we will go the way of the world and the amount of truth we have learned through listening to sermons will come to naught. I fear that my words are too many, and my actions too few. My God causes me to feel shame before you. I belong to you and in everything I should seek your good, should seek to help you in your training. The good I speak of is not material, but spiritual. At present I feel my spiritual life is so weak that if I had to meet the Lord now, I would be unprepared.

My desire is that you might obey the Holy Spirit in all things, seeking the abundant life until our Lord comes. And I fervently hope that you might stand without fear or shame when you come into the presence of our Lord, for the day when we will see his face is near. It is not my intention to distress you, because in all that concerns us, the Lord has prepared for us the boundless riches of his grace. He only asks that you seek him. If you truly seek him, you will find him because "the Lord is near to those who honor him." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Honor is made up of respect and fear. There are many who "respect God," but do not fear him. They are cold toward God. They dare to sin, and they fear other people rather than God. But fear of people rather than God is very dangerous. Many people seem to respect God outwardly, but do not have sincere respect for God in their hearts, nor do they fear God in their words and deeds. This is not true reverence for God.

"Time is short. We should separate ourselves from the ways of the world. One who belongs to heaven must have both the appearance and actions befitting that state. Why must we cower on the ground? Why not arise and stand before God? My hope for you is that you might die to yourselves, die to sin, die to selfishness, die to everything outside God so that in every way you may live in Christ and be filled with inner life. Only when we live for God will our lives be abundant and full, and the life of Christ will flow in us like a stream, manifesting his glory. If we love God and deny ourselves the evil one will have no way to hurt us.

Our grace from our Lord is all-encompassing. If anyone questions the reliability of God, and turns to depend on human reality, preferring to take charge of his own life and

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resolve our his problems in his own way, then he will be unwilling to surrender to the true and living God I urge you to believe in the true and living God. Dare to rely him. I also ask you to pray for me that I may grow in the stature of Chris and in all these things be steadfast in faith.

I sincerely desire that you might heed the word of the Lord. This is my earnest hope for you. To attempt to stand with your feet on two boats is very dangerous. A person might think she cannot live without walking in the way of the world. She doesn't want to give up money and material things, yet she also doesn't want to give up Jesus. She is like one who tries to stand with her feet on two boats: in the end she will be unable to keep her balance. That is not the right way, for there has never been anyone able to resolve their inner conflicts by relying totally on themselves, the problems will only increase, the anxiety become worse. I do not want you to think of the true and living God as dead and of yourselves as alive. The greatest tragedy of all is to be unable to share in God's presence.

I also would not have your faith to be merely on the surface. Enter through the narrow gate. Do not merely proclaim your faith in Jesus on the outside; rather, follow him. If you do not heed God's word it will break our Lord's heart. You have been bought with the precious blood of our Lord. You are loved by the Lord. Do not ignore the voice of the Lord, even in the smallest matter, for this will make the Spirit anxious over you. Do not let your hearts be anxious or troubled.

After you read this letter, please share it with Wan Xi Hu Village and the group that meets in Wang Xi's house.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always, until the Lord comes. Amen.

*Nanjing Theological Review, No. 11 (2/1989), pp.80-81.*  
Translated by Charles Wilson.

## **The Seminarian's Bookshelf**

Five years ago, many of the libraries and reading rooms of Chinese seminaries boasted only a few rows of bookshelves on which were placed a spare selection of volumes on the Bible, theology and church work, along with a few reference books. Teachers and students suffered from this lack of books for consultation and reading and it inevitably affected the quality of theological education, limiting the students' vision and intellectual possibilities. Of course the most important lessons for students in seminary lie in studies, Bible reading, prayer and spiritual development. None of these should be overlooked, but in preparing themselves to meet the spiritual needs of today's Chinese Christians, to be ready to bring the gospel message to our age, they also need to strengthen themselves in all areas of knowledge and experience (see Ex. 31:3, 35:31; Rom. 15:14; 1 Cor 12:8; Phil. 1:9; Heb. 2:3).

In recent years, the books on the shelves seem to have gradually increased in number. Many have been imported from Hong Kong or overseas, and of course there are many worthwhile books among them, but they are far from satisfying the thirst for knowledge and studious habits of our young students. In the last ten years, Nanjing Theological Seminary has published over thirty types of spiritual and theological books and periodicals, the majority of which were produced to meet Christians' spiritual needs and the requirements of theological education. Over the last two years the Committee on Theological Education of the China Christian Council has published the "Theological Education Series" ( eight volumes have been published, with three more planned for this year). These are meant as a curriculum for seminaries and as reference and self-study guides for pastors and lay people.

We are gladdened by the fact that in the last three or four years, non-Christians in the social sciences and philosophy have translated or written a number of works on the study of religion. This is both a reflection of Chinese intellectuals' increasing interest in and concern for religious issues and a source of beneficial reading matter for theological students and scholars of religion. Some of these are world-renowned works or new works of high scholarly caliber and several are specialized expositions of reputable Christian theology. Without question, these books enrich the knowledge and open up the horizons of theological students. In order to strengthen the collection of each seminary, the Committee on Theological Education has this year selected several dozen of the most worthwhile of these publications and presented them to the seminaries.

Here below, we introduce the more outstanding of these books on Christianity and general topics in religion, recently published or republished in China. Some are translations of scholarly or intellectual works which are not necessarily Christian in origin, but which are essential reading for theological students and other students of' religion.

### **1. Christianity**

1. *Confessions*. Augustine of Hippo, father of the church, theologian and bishop. Zhou Shiliang, trans. Commercial Press. 1963. Reprinted 1981. Fifth edition 1989. A classic of world scholarship. Essential reading for seminarians.

2. *Twelve Lectures on Biblical Literature*. A recent work by Prof. Zhu Weizhi of Nankai University (Tianjin). People's Publishing House, 1989. Includes excerpts from the Bible, the Apocrypha, deuterocanonical works, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and includes a literary critique.

3. *Venturing into the Bible* (in English). Prof. Kuo Siunmay of Nanjing University. Nanjing University Press, 1989. Selections from English translations of the Bible, with commentary and discussions and Chinese translation of specialized or difficult terms. An excellent volume for those whose English is college-level or above.

4. *Classic Quotations from Western Religion* (selected and edited) by Prof. Luo Zhenfang, Mo Ruxi et al of Nanjing Theological Seminary. Commercial Press, 1988. A collection of over three hundred commonly encountered quotations on religion from western works (the majority are from the Bible) with notes and sources, historical background, current meaning and use.

5. *Pensees*. Pascal. He Yaowu trans. Commercial Press, 1985. Pascal is a renowned seventeenth-century mathematician and philosopher. This is a book of reading notes and miscellaneous jottings focusing on religion and other philosophical questions. Also a classic of world literature.

6. *The Life of Jesus*. T.C. Chao. Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1988. A reissue of the 1935 edition published by the Shanghai YMCA Press. T.C. Chao is a celebrated Chinese theologian and author. This book is representative of his early work. According to the author, the book was written "using three slightly contrived methods: his own method of reading history; pure imagination; and understandings achieved through painful self-questioning." The narrative and interpretations found here may be rather different from those of Chinese church tradition, but in originality and the thought-provoking nature of the writing, it rivals Renan's *Life of Jesus*.

7. *Jesus*. Humphrey Carpenter. Zhang Xiaoming trans. from the 1980 Oxford University Press edition. Workers' Press, 1985. The author treats Jesus as a world-renowned thinker in this biography. The author has done rigorous textual research, but treats a profound subject in an easily accessible way. As an introduction to the person of Jesus for the ordinary reader, this makes fine reading, though it may not satisfy theological students in terms of faith or theology. Nevertheless, it has much to recommend it as supplementary reading in a course on the life of Jesus.

8. *The Later Biblical Literature* (i.e., the Apocrypha). Zhang Jiuxuan trans. on the basis of the United Bible Societies' 1979 edition of *The Good News Bible*. Commercial Press, 2nd edition, 1989. , A "Brief Introduction" precedes each book, making this a valuable tool for seminarians in their study of the Bible and the apocrypha.

9. *A Dictionary of People in the New Testament*. Selected and translated by Bai Yunxiao after J.D. Douglas et al, *A New Dictionary of the Bible*. Tianjin People's Publishing House, 1989. The book covers 165 New Testament figures and lists and annotates Bible references to each. A convenient reference for theological students in their study of the Bible.

10. *Christian Philosophy*. Yin Datai. Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1987. The author is professor of philosophy at Fudan University in Shanghai and has for many years researched and taught the history of Western philosophy and the history of Christian thought. The first half of the book is useful as supplementary source material on the history of Christian thought, while the latter half introduces the various schools and representative thinkers of contemporary Western Christianity.

11. *The Age of Faith*. Anne Freemantle, scholar of Medieval philosophy. Cheng Zhimin, trans. Guangming Daily Press, 1989. Materials for the study of the history of medieval Christian thought.

12. *Theology of Culture*. Paul Tillich. Chen Xinquan, Wang Ping trans. Workers' Press, 1988. A volume in the "Everyman series."

13. *The Courage To Be*. Paul Tillich. Chen Xiancong, Wang Zuohong trans. Guizhou People's Publishing House, 1988. In the "Modern Man and Society" series.

14. *Politics of Hope*. Paul Tillich. Xu Junrao trans. Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1989. In the "Religion and the World" series.

15. *The Discovery of Man - Martin Luther and the Religious Reformation*. Li Pingye. Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1983.

16. *A History of Christian Colleges in China*. Jesse G. Lutz. Zeng Posheng trans. Zhejiang Educational Press, 1987. The five hundred and fifty pages of this book outline the history of the sixteen (thirteen Protestant and three Catholic) Christian colleges opened in China between 1850 and 1950 and their impact on Chinese culture and education. This is an extremely valuable historical resource. There remain some errors and bias in its stance toward and evaluation of certain historical movements and incidents, but it may still serve as a reference in the study of the history of Chinese Christianity (in the modern era).

17. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Max Weber. Huang Xiaojing, Peng Qiang trans. Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1986. "Toward the Future" series. This is the piece de resistance of the famous German social scientist. Essential reading for the study of religion and society.

18. *Principles of Christian Theology*. John MacQuarrie. Gao Shining trans. Shanghai People's Publishing House, forthcoming.

19. *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*. John MacQuarrie. He Guanghu, Gao Shining trans. Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1989. Nos. 18 and 19 are representative works of this famous contemporary English theologian. No seminary library should be without them.

## II. Religion and Comparative Religion

20. *Guide to the Study of Religion*. Max Moller. Cheng Huansheng, Li Peizhu trans. Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1989.

21. *The Origins and Development of Religion*. Max Moller. Jin Zeze trans. Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1989. Nos. 20 and 21 were written by one of the founders of modern religious studies and are representative works of the famous English religious scholar. Classic sources for research in religion.

22. *The History of the Comparative Study of Religion*. Eric Sharp. Lu Daji, He Guanghu, Xu Dajian trans. Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1988.

23. *Primitive Religion and Myth*. W. Schmidt, Lai Shiyi, Chen Xiangchun trans. Shanghai Arts Publishing House, 1987. Written by the famous German authority on the history of religion, this is a condensation of his representative work *The Origins of the Concept of God* (originally in thirteen volumes), and gives a fairly comprehensive discussion of theories on the origins of religion, as well as the author's "primitive-theism." A facsimile of the 1948 Puren edition.

24. *Ten World Religions*. Huang Xinchuan ed., Oriental Press, 1988.

25. *Three World Religions and their schools*. Yu Ke, ed. Hunan People's Publishing House, 1988.

26. *Religious Issues During China's Socialist Period*. Luo Zhufeng, ed. Shanghai Academy of Sciences Press, 1987.

In addition to the above, we should make special mention of two occasional collections of essays on religion (series):

27. *Culture. China and the World*, Nos. 1-4. Joint Publishing.

28. *Christian Culture Review: a critique*. No. 1. Guizhou People's Publishing House, 1990.

These two "series" are collections of original writings and translations by contemporary Chinese scholars of religion as well as middle-aged and young scholars, covering a broad range of topics; setting forth arguments, introducing current trends, schools of thought and persons in international religious studies and Christian theology. The two series are evidence of the thriving and vigorous situation in religious studies in China in recent years. On this basis, we can also predict that Christian theology in China is on the brink of a new hundred flowers period.

Forthcoming: A new comprehensive dictionary of the Bible will be published shortly. The Shanghai Translation Press has already selected the *Dictionary of the Bible* (Eerdmans) and has recruited translators from among Christians in Shanghai and instructors and research students at Nanjing Theological Seminary. The book includes some 5000 entries amounting to two million words (Chinese characters). The original book is a translation of the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* edited by the Dutch authority J.H. Kok (1950, revised and expanded twice, 3rd edition, 1979) published by Eerdmans in 1987, consisting of 1094pp.) The commentaries were provided by evangelical Biblical scholars and theologians and draws on the latest findings in the fields of ancient Biblical languages, folklore, history, text criticism and theology. It reflects an orthodox understanding of faith, and chooses from the abundant commentaries of every school and scholar, by way of comparison. The main contents are long commentaries, with the Biblical source given for each entry, making it a convenient reference tool, essential for clergy, theological professors and students and Biblical researchers. The volume will be published by the Shanghai Translation Press in 1991.

In future issues, we will continue to provide book news and reviews of new works and translations.

*Nanjing Theological Review, No. 12 (1/1990), pp. 114-117*  
Translated by Janice Wickeri..

## SERMONS

### Deal Gently with the Ignorant and Wayward - Wang Weifan<sup>\*</sup>

Text: Heb. 5: 1-3.

From the field of psychology we get the term "trial and error" which indicates that in all animal behavior, there is testing ... failure ... retesting ... failure ... finally tending toward a pattern of accuracy. With a microscope, we can observe the movements of that primitive single-celled creature, the ameba. It stretches out one pseudopodium and then another, going through repeated trial and error, until it locates food. If we put a white mouse into a maze near the entrance and put some food in another part of the maze, we will see the mouse applying the trial and error method. If one path doesn't work in its attempts to get to the food, it tries another. Only after repeated and numerous trials and errors does the white mouse locate the one path which connect to the food.

There is an old saying in China: "The old horse knows the way," which means that an old horse knows which is the road home. This saying has its origins in a story from the Spring and Autumn Annals period (722-484 BC) of Chinese history about an official name Guang Zhong. Guang Zhong accompanied Duke Heng of Qi on a punitive expedition. They set out in the spring and were returning in winter, but they lost their way. Guang Zhong said: "We can use the old horse's knowledge." So they gave an old horse its head to lead the entourage and the army followed along behind. In this way they found the route home. "The old horse knows the way" because it has experienced the vicissitudes of life, it has gone through innumerable trials and errors, and in the end is able to recognize which is the one return route.

Human behavior is also a matter of trial and error; something which is most obvious in babies and children. Yet, this even holds true for adults. In matters of choice between good and evil, or true and false, the Adam in humankind suffers greatly, caught up nearly every day in trial and error, just like the first Adam. Ignorance and willfulness are humankind's fundamental mode of behavior before God. Ignorance means the stupidity and confusion which put us utterly in the dark. There are two aspects to our waywardness: recalcitrance or willfulness, and being led astray. To be totally confused about the will of God and to be lured onto the path that runs opposite to it is the most fundamental, most innate deficiency and weakness of human nature since Adam.

God chose priests primarily to forgive, understand and have pity on ignorant and wayward humans. He also did it out of overwhelming sympathy for us. God spoke through Moses: "... bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the holy place, for a continual remembrance before the Lord" (Ex. 28:29). The reason the "priests' breastplate" is here termed "the breastpiece of judgment" is precisely because the people find it difficult to judge right from wrong. On their own they become lost and do not know which way to turn; priests are needed to bring the people's sense of vacillation before

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God. At the same time, the priest must "bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for remembrance" (Ex. 28:12). The two stones with names engraved upon them which are borne between the shoulders of the priest are known as "stones of remembrance," to indicate that when the priest comes before the Lord he must remember the people's sins and transgressions in order to bear their weakness and waywardness. On the priest's forehead, there is a plate of gold engraved with "Holy to the Lord"; "it shall always be on his forehead, in order that they (the people) may find favor before the Lord" (Ex. 28:38). The duty of the priest is not to increase the distance between God and the people, or to cause the people to incur the wrath of God and sink into God's punishment and blame; but rather to ensure that they are found acceptable to the Lord. The priest shall not shrink from exchanging his or her own pain for the people's peace and shall bring his or her wounds in exchange for their healing.

God did not choose priests from among his pure and unsullied angels. God chose them from the human world because a priest must in every respect "be like his brothers and sisters" (Heb. 2:17). Like them, he or she must be "ensnared by weakness." Like them, the priest will often be lost, not knowing where to turn in the throws of ignorance, bewilderment, stupidity, and confusion; frequently led astray by willfulness and recalcitrance and sink into confusion. Only in this way can a priest forgive, understand and sympathize with ignorant and wayward people. Coming before God, the priest must first sacrifice for his or her own sins, being a sinner at heart and in the same position as the rest of the people. The priest is of the same standard and does not surpass them.

This is the most basic spiritual quality which as seminarians or pastors we must prepare in ourselves: to recognize in ourselves the bonds of weakness and then completely forgive and sympathize with the weakness of the flock. A pastor must sympathize with the ignorance and waywardness of the flock, not seize upon their imperfections as tools with which to attack and cast them out. As pastors, we must always bear their confusion and lostness between our shoulders and in our hearts, we must remember the weakness of the flock before God; we must not be indifferent or numb, and can never take pleasure in others' misfortune. We must never ever forget that we are just ordinary people and sinners, bound by weakness and transgressions. We must never forget that before we pray for the people, we must first sacrifice for our own sins and transgressions. We must never act as if we are "superhuman" or "saints."

Our entire mission, all our work, our whole lives, revolve around one center, which is to remember and to carry the people's ignorance and sin, to bring people to holiness in Yahweh and to make them "acceptable before God." In order to protect the sheep we may have to lay down our lives. We cannot shirk responsibility, nor place the flock in danger. We should be like our great priest, the great shepherd, so that through us the sheep may receive sympathy, forgiveness, assistance and comfort. To put it another way, we should take the ignorant and wayward flock to Jesus Christ who can understand and sympathize with our weakness, that we and they may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Jn. 10:7-11; Heb. 14:14-16).

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Translated by Janice Wickeri.

## **Arise and Eat - Gao Jianguo\***

1 Kings 17:2-16; 19: 1-8

Today's message is about bread, the bread the prophet Elijah ate while in the wilderness. Bread is mentioned many times in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus shared bread with five thousand people once and another time with four thousand. He broke bread with his twelve disciples and on the shores of Lake Tiberias he prepared breakfast for the disciples.

Bread signifies the provision of sustenance in our daily life and work. The word of God, the way of God and the truth of God is the bread for our very life. The Lord Jesus is also our bread of life. The breaking of bread at communion is a partaking of the Lord's body.

In this passage of scripture we see the prophet Elijah eating. In every case God provides him with the bread he eats. It is the spiritual and physical provision for Elijah's work.

Have you not noticed the three different sources of this spiritual and physical bread which is supplied for Elijah? He receives bread from ravens, from a widow and from an angel. These three types of bread differ in the circumstances of the way they are given, in their goals and in what they imply.

For example, the bread the ravens brings is a special provision God makes for his servant during the difficult times of the prolonged drought in Israel, to ensure that he does not suffer physically. God uses the birds to feed Elijah. The bird itself is anxious for food, a bird of prey, yet here it provides the food to God's servant at the appropriate time.

We find yet another meaning in the food served Elijah by the widow. This food was not given simply to nourish life, for if that were the case, God could have continued to have the raven feed him; why send him somewhere else? Does not God have the power to continue feeding his children in whatever way he chooses? Of course. It is therefore, part of God's intention to have the widow of Zarephath go and prepare good for the prophet.

Furthermore, let us consider why the angel should come and give Elijah food: it is to give to Elijah the strength he needs along the way. We must realize that the road Elijah is to travel is a long and difficult one.

"These three types of bread then, signify three meanings and need as well. Today I would like to explore my own understanding and views of this text with you, as a form of mutual encouragement.

### **Elijah Receives Sustenance from the Raven (I Kings 17:2-6)**

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"And the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of Jordan. You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to the word of the Lord; for he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi."

Israel's king Ahab and his people had rejected God and gone off to serve Baal, arousing God's anger. Because of this, it had not rained in three years and six months. In such a difficult situation we can understand how dreadful the people's lives had become. But God does not forget his servants. Since God expects his servants to serve him, how could he not care for them? Naturally he cares for them. God all along cares for his people's daily life. Before God placed man and woman in the Garden of Eden he first prepared every kind of tree that would be pleasing to look at and whose fruit would make good food. (see Gen. 2:9) Are not fruits extremely nutritious, after all?

Our Savior Jesus Christ taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt. 6:11). Will he not care for our daily needs? He would not sit idly by when the five thousand who had come to hear him had empty stomachs, he would not send them away empty, but shared out the five loaves and two fishes until all were satisfied.

After his resurrection Jesus Christ appeared on the shores of the Sea of Tiberius to the seven disciples fishing there, and his first question was: "Are you hungry?" He fed them what he had prepared.

These examples illustrate how very much God cares for everyone's welfare.

It is only natural that we are concerned for our own lives, constantly thinking of what we are going to eat, what we are going to wear, putting our own needs first. We have, but want more; we are rich but want to be richer; the more the better, we think; and some people's material desires are insatiable, leading them into a life of crime. They are to be pitied. We are the children and servants of God; such a road is not for us. And as children and servants of God, we would not do such things.

Thus, with regard to the question of how we are to live, God has prepared things for us - making it possible for us to live a normal life and even to have more than enough. We need only cultivate a heart which knows contentment.

### **Elijah Receives Food from the Widow (1 Kings 17:8-16)**

We cannot say that upon solving the problems of life all will be well. These matters pertain to our physical life, but God cares also for the spiritual affairs of life. God now orders the prophet Elijah to go the house of a widow of Zarephath for food. He sent Elijah there that he might grow in the spirit, adding to his faith, kindling in him a caring heart, training him in prayer, and bestowing upon him the grace to raise from the dead. God used the widow and her son to temper Elijah's spiritual life.

From this passage of scripture, we see that the meal in the widow's jar is not used up nor is her oil exhausted. But this is truly a matter of testing faith, for though Elijah says the meal and oil will not be used up, God now allows him to personally see and experience the event. God further allows Elijah to grow in love and care.

As Elijah reaches the widow's house her son unfortunately dies of an illness. Though the widow ranted and raved and mourned her loss aloud, Elijah kept his patient demeanor, remaining even-tempered and in good humor. Elijah then went to her son, lifted him and carried him to his own bed. Elijah then began to pray earnestly before God for the young lad. God gave Elijah so much strength that the boy's spirit reentered his body and the boy lived. Gladness returned to that home that day. This gave the widow a deeper understanding of God and of God's servant.

If Elijah did not have an abundant spiritual life, could he have brought life to the dead?

We are the same as Elijah, in need of an abundant spiritual life. God is concerned for our earthly body and life, but he is also concerned for our spiritual life. God unceasingly trains us in the spiritual life. God uses the bread of faith, the bread of life to help us, to train us. And we shall grow: in the service of God, on the road of faith, in a loving life, and in spiritual power.

### **Elijah is Fed by an Angel (1 Kings 19:1-8)**

God trains us in the spiritual life in order that we may do his work and be useful in his service. Twice, God had his angel bring Elijah bread to eat. The angel also told Elijah a very important thing: "Get up, eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." Elijah ate and drank and with his new strength he went forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. There he received God's command and prepared for his work.

We can say that the bread sent by the angel was nourishment for Elijah's work. Strength is needed as we follow work's road and strength is needed too for all the practical work of our lives. Where does such strength come from? Naturally, it comes from God. The Bible says: "I can do all things through him (God) who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

It is said that whether one works well or not depends on whether one has enough to eat. God's food is the strength of our lives. We cannot stop on the road of ministry, nor can we flee or hide, even less can we be afraid. Although Elijah was successful in his work, he could still feel weakness, fatigue and fear.

The all-powerful God, the loving Father, cares for his servants. Through an angel he sends nourishment, meets our needs, kindles our enthusiasm. Thus he enables us to persist in our efforts, to rally after failure, to brandish the staff of victory, to run the road before us and to guard the truth.

Work and eating have a lot in common. Some people are willing to work but are not willing to eat. They work but they do not seek the bread of life, nor do they receive it. Their strength is not enough for the task. The results of their work are not very good,

their morale is low, their direction unclear. All this results from a lack of the bread of life.

There are others who are willing to eat but not to work. They read the Bible every day! Sing hymns! Have spiritual refreshment! Their knowledge of the Bible is pretty good, they have a lot of devotional books, possibly they are as full as they can be of Biblical lessons. But they will not work, they stay at home cultivating their spiritual lives, for they fear church work will be too difficult and complicated - a pain in the neck. They're afraid they might injure themselves, or they feel they've suffered enough in the past and do not want to risk any more suffering.

They're doing all right now, they have the grandchildren around, they're not badly off financially. So what's the use'? Better to stay home and nourish the spirit, pray, read the Bible, possibly do a little *qigong* exercise. But what a pity, to be willing to be fed, but unwilling to work.

There are other people who are very good, willing to eat and willing to serve. Every day they strive to be fed, every day they put themselves wholeheartedly into service. The food they have taken gives them strength for the work of the ministry. One can only envy them.

There are still others who are not only unwilling to be fed, but are not willing to work either. They waste away the days, busy about nothing. They have no goals and experience no growth. How pitiful they are.

Grant that God may give us the bread of work to enable us to devote the time that remains to us to God's service. Elijah was entrusted with three anointings: God sent him to anoint Hazael king of Syria, to anoint Jehu king over Israel, and to anoint Elisha to take over the work of Elijah. Much in the same way it can be said we have been entrusted with three good things: to use properly the beautiful staff bestowed upon us by God; to run well the road prepared for us, and to share well our faith. This is our hope. We read today that Elijah was given bread to eat three times. Grant that we may keep God's words in our hearts as we run the race before us.

*Collected Sermons*, No. 20 (1990), pp. 59-63.  
Translated by Britt Towery.

## Out of Death into Life - Li Yading\*

text: Eph. 2:1-10

After Paul met the Lord on the road to Damascus and was illumined by the light of God, his whole personality underwent a fundamental change, from a fervent Jewish believer and chief oppressor of the church, he changed into a faithful servant who devoted himself to the gospel and to the family of God. For him, there existed only Jesus Christ and his cross. His work was how to establish the body of Christ, that is, the church of God. The famous epistles from prison, of which the Letter to the Ephesians is one, were born of these experiences.

Paul was a Gentile apostle, and Ephesus was one of the churches he personally founded in Asia Minor. It was a Gentile church but there were a fair number of Jews in it as well. The Jews had always stressed the law of Moses, and looked down upon the Gentiles. In the church in those days, the prejudice of the Jews against the Gentiles had not yet been completely dispelled by their faith in Christ; they would not even eat together (Gal. 2: 11-15). Thus, Paul was interested in eliminating the prejudices and obstacles that separated Jews and Gentiles over matters that caused unhappiness between the two and were obstacles to the witness of the gospel. In quiet communion with God while in prison, Paul received a revelation from God and wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he described the relationship between the church and Christ as well as the relationship among believers in the body of Christ. The Church is the body of Christ, whether one is a Jew, or a Gentile, all are in Christ. Through the blood of Christ, the wall separating Jew and Gentile has been thrown down and they have become part of the family of God. Moreover, in Christ they are all limbs of one body. This is what the letter to the Ephesians is saying to us.

God's message to the church through Paul is not limited by time, space or place. What happened at that time between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church at Ephesus, still exists in the church today. For historical reasons and reasons of social environment, all kinds of walls are still thrown up between Christians which create a great deal of discord, even causing divisions in the body of Christ. One of the primary reasons for this is that many Christians do not understand the marvelous will of God for the church, nor the spiritual relationship among people in the body of Christ. Now I would like to look at Ephesians 2: 1-10 with you, to share its teachings and the study the spiritual lessons found there.

### **I. The life lived while dead through trespass (v. 1-3).**

In the first three verses, Paul speaks of "he" (Christ) who is the opposite of the "ruler of the power of the air," and the "life" which is in opposition to "death." This is in preparation for what will be said later. Paul's main concern in this passage is the

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circumstances of the life lived while "(lead through trespasses and sins." He calls that "ruler of the power of the air" a "son of disobedience," "the spirit that is now at work": "you" (the Gentiles) and "us" (Jews) "by nature children of wrath," are no different from each other in trespass and sin, none has any reason to boast: (for) the fruits of sin are death. The death which is meant here is not a physical death, but a spiritual one. Spiritual death implies a complete separation from the life of God, that communion between the soul and God is completely severed, which means that the soul is no longer able to comprehend the things of the spirit. Also because of trespass and sin, humankind has lost much of stewardship of nature. When God first created Adam, he placed him above nature, he could name the birds of the air and the beasts that walk upon the earth and live together with the animals (Gen. 2:19-20). But from the moment of Adam's sin, humankind lost many of its original abilities. To cite the most conspicuous illustration, when there is to be an earthquake many animals have the ability to foretell the impending disaster, but we humans, the pinnacle of creation, are unable to predict it, and must rely upon portents we see among the animal kingdom to warn us. It was through sin that humankind lost this skill; therefore, all those who live in sin are spiritually dead (Mt. 8:22). When Jews and Gentiles live in sin, their bodies still live, but their souls have died. "...you have a name of being alive, but you are dead" (Rev. 3:1). In the Old Testament, there are many places where a person is pointed out as living in a condition of mental abnormality, captivity, separation or defeat; that is, in the midst of death. When one has been forsaken by God, and is conquered by evil then one is also in the midst of death. (Ps. 22) This is a real death, more to be feared than physical death. In fact, all those in thrall to death in sin live between the two threats of physical death and eternal damnation, they cannot find peace, they cannot save themselves.

So we say that repentance, accepting God's grace, is the only way to throw off the terrors of death. Only in this way, when God's righteousness and salvation come to mortals, only then can one wrest life from death, only then can the sins which one has committed be obliterated. Even though we humans have sinned, God still grants us opportunities, he still allows us to hear his voice, and what's more, to arise, to say to him, "I am a sinner." Just like the prodigal in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, who had been living in sin, but came to himself, was able to arise and return to his father's house and entreat his father's forgiveness: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you." Here we see the critical point of the question is that we come to our senses, that we repent and change our future behavior. As Paul says further on: "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph. 5:14).

In the next two verses, Paul makes a particular point of reviewing the fearsome situation of those living in sin, under the sway of death. That spectacle is one that Paul himself and all those who believe in the Lord and turn to Christ have experienced. Thus, when we hear it, it seems familiar, it all seems to pass before our eyes. Paul mentions these things, on the one hand, to underscore the vastness of God's grace in us and on the other, to remind believers that they must, above all, be worthy of God's grace. One who has been brought back to life in Christ, can never fall back into the morass of evil of the past life.

"The course of this world." The phrase "this world" might be translated "this age." Its meaning in Greek is time and space, age, eternity; later it came to have the same meaning as "world."

Ecclesiastes and the authors of revelation literature frequently use the phrase "this age" to contrast with the perfect, eternal kingdom of God.

For a person living in this world, in an evil age, it is so very easy to go with the flow. Due to the innate weakness of human nature, one cannot conquer all the temptations of the world. On the contrary it is much easier to submit to the prevailing influences of the world and follow where the "courses of this world" lead. As Christians, how shall we situate ourselves in this world? Shall we follow "the course of the world"? Or shall we follow a spiritual order in our behavior? This is related to the witness of the church in the world.

The first time I saw a United States coin before I had been to the US, I was very moved by the important words engraved on it: "In God We Trust." But after going to that place where money is king, much to my dismay, I saw another side of things: some people trusted only in money and completely forgot the words engraved thereon. The only thing such people worship is money, or put another way, money is their "god." And one day when they have to bid their money adieu, then their "god" will abandon them forever. As Christians we see the wonderful blessings that God has already prepared for us and so we cannot envy the things of the world. We live in this world, (but) we should "rise up unsoiled out of the muck," we cannot "take on the colors of our company." We must live a life that can stand up to the light of the sun. Our actions must be worthy of the grace of Jesus Christ. This is why Paul keeps bringing up things past.

In Paul's eyes, the evil one, the devil, and his domination over the present world and over humankind is an undeniable fact. In order to escape his destiny of defeat, the devil tries in a thousand and one ways to obstruct and sabotage the work of God, strives his utmost to attack the Lord Jesus and with him, his disciples and his church. The object of the struggle between God and the devil is, of course, humankind. The devil pursues his work of sabotage in the spiritual realm.

Many Biblical scholars believe that "the ruler of the power of the air" is another designation for the devil, because he represents "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12), and has also been termed "the ruler of this world" (Jn. 12:31). "The air" does not refer to the heavens where God dwells, nor to the earth. The Greek term means the realm below the skies, the place where the evil spirit dwells. We can say that this evil spirit living in "the air" creates the most serious pollution. He also "prowls around ... looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Living in such an atmosphere, it is easy for humans to fall into all the snares of the evil one and thus become his implements, turning against God. Here "turning against" suggests being in opposition to God's will, not only disobedience, but a kind of rebellious behavior. It expresses itself in turning against the spirit of God, against God's law, in not following Christ, in refusing to accept the gospel, etc. So Paul terms these rebels "those who are disobedient," "by nature children of wrath." This even more clearly illustrates humankind's fallen nature. This type of rebellion against God, one which freely follows its own desires, is a life lived out under the wrath of God. Since God's wrath is an expression of God's holiness and mercy, of his will and omnipotence, human sin will naturally meet with God's wrath, unless humans find God's salvific grace.

At this point, Paul points directly to the fact that you (the Gentiles) and us (the Jews), before we have accepted Christ's saving grace are the same as the "children of disobedience." We are all rebels against God and are all dead in sin. Whether in terms of Life, or nature or action, we all are slaves of the evil one. This being the case, who can boast, who is qualified to point out the faults of others'? If not for the advent of God's saving grace, would there be any difference between ourselves and others? Paul's words, like a mirror, show up human beings' natural appearance like a flash of strong light - they reveal all. We can imagine that when the Christians in the church at Ephesus read this passage, they had no way to defend themselves except by verbal acquiescence, nodding their agreement, confessing their sin and repentance, "taking the blame upon themselves" (Jn. I6:8). Here, between the third and fourth verses, we seem to feel a slight pause, a silent "selah." But here silence overcomes sound. Paul's review of the past is not mean simply to cast people into gloom and guilt, but to lead them from darkness into light. The next word to come from Paul's pen is "yet," and this takes us into a clear distinction with things past, into another world.

## **2. Living in the Saving Grace of Christ (v. 4-7).**

In this instance, "yet" is not only a grammatical shift or a change in tone, even more importantly it is a matter of sin and grace, death and life, of two worlds, a watershed between two kinds of life. Though when we were dead in sin our condition was so corrupt, so pitiable, so hopeless, by this "yet," through God's abundant mercy, because of God's great love, we are brought to life with Christ. This life is the self-revelation of God as the Creator, the one "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17). The motive of God's salvific grace lies purely in his mercy and love. The abundance of his mercy serves as a foil to the ponderousness of our original sin. If not for the abundance of his mercy, not only could we not be plucked from the mire of sin, we would sink deeper into it. I once heard about a man addicted to gambling; he gambled wildly in gambling dens into the wee hours. He couldn't save himself and gambled everything away. He made a great resolution after that to change his ways and even cut two fingers off his right hand, which shows how firm was his resolve. But before the wounds had healed, his three-fingered hand was seen in the gambling dens again and he even cared so little for his wife as to make her collateral for his bet. From this we can see the power of evil. Even though people are aware of their sin, they are powerless before it and are conquered by it. We can also see in this story the pathetic and hopeless situation of one lost to sin and get an even deeper appreciation of the abundance of God's mercy. Paul himself had the deepest insight into this: "...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the foremost. But for that very reason, I received mercy" (I Tim. 1:15-16).

The mercy and love of God is an expression of God's temperament. It is because God loves us that he acts upon his mercy, and mercy is a movement of his love. God's love is that eternal love for the sinner,

it is a love whose price was the blood of God's beloved son, it is a love to the end. This love makes clear both the abundance of God's mercy and God's omnipotence; the dead can be raised and eternal life can be granted to his beloved son. From this we see that the most important thing which God's great love does for us is to call us to life while we are (lead in sin. So in verse six

Paul specially highlights "raised" and "alive" and emphasizes "made us alive *together with Christ*" and "raised us up *with him*." These few words encompass the entire history of Christ's death for our sins, his burial and resurrection from (lie dead, as well as the facts that we were dead in sin together with him and are alive in grace. Paul tells us "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22x) and "if we have been united with him in a death like this" (Rom. 6:5x). In the same way, "so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22b); moreover, "we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom. 6:5b). From then on we are no longer people who are dead in sin, but because of Christ's resurrection, we are also alive with him. We are not worthy of this grace; it is totally due to God's mercy and love. Thus it is said "by grace you have been saved" (v.5). If not through Jesus Christ, no one can be made alive.

In Greek, "resurrection" includes "coming back to life", "waking from a deep sleep", "raising a sick person", "being raised to glory." In verses 5 to 6, Paul uses three terms meaning respectively "coming back to life", "being resurrected with" and "sit with him in the heavenly places." These three terms are the highest expression of God's love. God liberates humankind from the domination of sin, and conquers death with life. Not only does God bring humanity back to life and bestow heavenly life upon it, but raises us up to the realm where we can be together with Christ. It is not only Christ whom God raises on high, but Christ's people together with him, to sit with him in the heavens. What great grace and glory this is! At the same time we notice that these three terms which Paul uses are all in the past tense, illustrating that what God has done for us in Jesus Christ is an accomplished fact. That is to say, although we Christians are still bound by the flesh and live in the present world, in terms of the spirit, we no longer belong to this world. In Christ Jesus, we already enjoy the blessings of heaven. Our physical bodies on this earth reveal the life, the authority and ability of the resurrected Christ. Looked at in this way, resurrection is not simply a state of the future, but also of the present. For Christians to sit with Christ in the heavenly places is transcendent, yet it is immanent in real life. Thus in Ephesians Paul places even greater emphasis on the significance of "who are at Ephesus" (1:1) and exhorts the believers "'Honor your father and mother... so that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth'" (6:3). This is because God's omnipotence hold dominion over the earth and God has no intention of abandoning nor ignoring it. Of course it is Christians' future hope and part and parcel of their faith to be able to live with God in paradise, to enjoy with God the glory of that realm. Many are optimistic that they will have a place in heaven; this is not rare and has been so through history. Christ's, James and John, once asked him to promise that they would be with him in his glory, one sitting on his right and one on his left. But our Lord answered them: "'You do not know what you are asking. ... whoever would be great among you must be your servant. ... whoever would be first among you must be slave of all'" (Mk. 10:37-44).

Many Biblical commentators believe that the "heavenly places" Paul mentions here do not refer to the absolute dwelling place of God, nor yet to some eternal kingdom or jurisdiction, but to the presence of God, the place filled with God's glory and omnipotence, the source of the moving force of salvation. Only those who believe in God, only those who are alive in God, have such special power, glory and ability; in a place where they are slaves, in the courses of this world, they witness to God as "priests," and carry out God's ministry. Thus, this is not simply a type of grace, but a kind

of responsibility. Through it God wants us to realize his excellent plan in us, and to allow us to know the function and responsibility of our lives on this earth

Paul uses the word "immeasurable riches" to describe God's grace. Paul also uses it to describe the abundance of God's mercy and the greatness of his power. God's power and omnipotence are shown in the fact that he caused Christ to rise from the dead, to rise to heaven and to sit at his right hand. That God causes Christ's people to share in all this with Christ also shows God's utmost grace. And God wants to show this to "the coming ages" through us. "Ages" is plural here; it does not refer to one generation only but to generation after generation. In Chinese, we translate this word as "show" which does not seem very exact or forceful. In English it is given as "to prove," which seems to come closer to the original meaning.

The word which Paul uses is actually a legal term which has the sense of "demonstrate" or "witness to." For example, in a court of law, the prosecution must not only present the basic facts of the case, but must introduce compelling evidence to prove the person's guilt or innocence. Paul uses this term to develop his thinking, to witness to God's power, justice and judgment and also to prove the immeasurable riches of God's love and grace. In the Old Testament, God shows his omnipotence and justice to people through creation and salvation. The heavens and the earth, the universe and all creation are God's evidence and the Israelites his witnesses. In the New Testament, God proves his omnipotence and grace through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, the church and the saints within it have become witnesses to God, revealing God Himself to the principalities and powers of the heavens and the earth (3:10). God gave the church authority to spread salvation throughout the Greco-Roman world in order to establish his justice and dominion throughout the earth. On the other hand, in terms of individual salvation, God wants to "display his perfect patience for an example for those who were to believe in him for eternal life" (I Tim. 1:16). At the same time, in the grace of our Lord Jesus, God also proves their innocence. Paul's thinking here is a very good foreshadowing of his later words: "For we are his workmanship" (v. 10), along with "for by grace you have been saved through faith; ... not because of works."

### **3. For we are his workmanship (v. 8-10).**

In these two verses, we find two types of work: 1) the miracle and grace of God's creation; and 2) humankind's own toil and the good works God has prepared for us.

1) The miracle and grace of God's creation: There is an extremely intimate connection between God's creation and God's saving grace. The entire Bible illustrates for us that the Creator is the Savior and the Savior is the Creator. God's actions of creating and saving began with the very creation of heaven and earth and continue until their end. This shows that he is the Lord of the universe, the Creator of all things. So in Paul's thinking, "to be saved" and "the new creation" have the same meaning. The church is a new creation in God's hands, and we are newly created persons through our belief in Jesus Christ. We become "newly created", not on our own account, but for the name of God and the glory of God. These "people of the new creation", together with Christ, become the first fruits of all creation, the pinnacle of all God's work.

People of the world always like to brag about their own achievements, they become intoxicated with some discovery of their own or something they have created. Strictly speaking, however,

nothing is a human discovery or creation, humans can only discover God's creation from the material world, the universe and all that is in it which God has created for us. In fact, there are a number of things which have always been there, but which we have not discovered. Human intelligence and knowledge is as nothing before the Creator of the universe. The great scientist Newton achieved so much during his life, but in his later years he said that he was simply like a child picking up shells along the beach and all he had done was to gather a few that were prettier than those anyone else had gathered. When anyone compares what they as an individual have discovered with the creation of God, they become more aware of their own insignificance and sing greater praises of the wonders of God's creation.

## **2) Therefore, a genuine, humble Christian cannot boast of his own knowledge and actions.**

The condition of Christians in sin which have been reviewed above, tell us in a negative way that Christians have no cause for pride, they can only rely on the might of God for salvation and work together with God. This means accepting God's grace and then, with God's guidance, doing the holy work which God has prepared for us and all that is pleasing to God.

We are not saved by any good works, but being saved, we must do good works: Christians themselves are not the author of such good works, it is the life-giving spirit which brings people out of death into life, and which tells us to do good, to do what is right. It is the work of God that makes us willingly do good works. These goods works were prepared for us beforehand by God, we only carry them out, in faith, obedience and praise. What we do may be called good because it comes from the Lord, it is the fruit of salvific grace. Therefore, "if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

Another side to this is that God's good works are not some abstract concept, but genuine, living things. God's work of salvation is not simply the work of God alone, he needs us to work with him. We are called as God's workers. We have been is accomplished in Christ, thus we must model ourselves on Christ's example. Christians have been accepted forever, along with their ability to do work that is adjudged "good, pleasing and complete," so that one day when they stand before God in judgment, when God will judge each individual on the evidence of the good works they have done, using Christ as a standard. The work of each individual must be tested in the fires of judgment (I Cor. 3: 13-15). In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, where Jesus tells the parable of responsibility according to ability, illustrates this point. To the servant who made five thousand and two thousand pieces of silver, the master says: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much." Plainly, what matters is not the extent of our ability, but whether we have done all we could to serve the Lord. What God will bestow upon us is not simply enjoyment, but a greater measure of work. Another servant was tested by the master, but because he had not earned a single cent, the master termed him, "you wicked and slothful servant" and the result was that he was "cast into the outer darkness". Thus we must be clear about God's will for us: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), do not fail God's vast saving grace. When that day comes, we will hear the Lord say to us gently: "Well done, you good and faithful servant."

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Translated by Janice Wickeri.

## Love and Reconciliation - Gao Ying\*

Ephesians 2: 13-16

If we read through the whole Bible we will soon realize that its central message is God's love and the reconciliation between people and God.

The first implication of the word "reconciliation" is that a relationship is established with another person; it does not indicate a relationship with oneself. Reconciliation encompasses every kind of relationship between people, it is something that happens between two sides. A relationship may be between two persons, or between two organizations or two countries.

Secondly, reconciliation means some sort of change has taken place in the relationship. It may mean that hate changes into love, division changes into union and confrontation into peace and friendship. Reconciliation is the repair, the rebuilding of relationships that had been broken, bringing them back, restoring them to their former harmonious state.

Thirdly, reconciliation embodies tolerance, forgiveness, and disregard of old debts. Especially at a time when one who has been hurt desires to rebuild the relationship with the one who hurt him or her, forgiveness and pardon become essential parts of reconciliation.

Let us now move from the common understanding of reconciliation to its deeper meaning.

As Christians we have a special understanding of reconciliation that reflects this deeper meaning. We do not only believe that reconciliation is a change brought about in human relationships, more importantly it embodies change in and restoration of the relationship between God and people. This means that reconciliation encompasses two kinds of changed relationships: Reconciliation between God and people, and reconciliation between persons. Our basic yearning, that which we seek, is reconciliation between God and people. This reconciliation is at the center of all other relationships. Reconciliation in other relationships is built on the foundation of the reconciliation between God and people, it is the fruit of God's reconciliation with us.

In this epistle, Paul mentions reconciliation three times. He does not just talk about reconciliation between persons; his most important message is reconciliation between God and people. Since the fall of Adam, all human beings have lost their favor in God's sight; but God in his great love sent his only son Jesus Christ to die for our sins, so that through faith we may be restored to our former place as sons and daughters of God. Paul says in Ephesians 2:13 to 16: "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall ... that he might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it." From this we can see that first of all, it is God who acts and not people in changing and restoring the relationship between them. Secondly,

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we can now be close to God. We have been restored to our place as sons and daughters of God not because our sins are tolerable or because we have moved God with our ability to confess, but by God's great love alone. It is God's great love that moved us. Only because Jesus Christ shed his precious blood for us on the cross can we have peace, only because Christ's flesh endured death can we be reconciled with God.

God is love. From God's love, reconciliation and restoration, intimacy and consolation stream forth.

In today's world we see not only the presence of God's love, but hate, fear, murder and war. Christians as well as non-Christians in China remember the Cultural Revolution as ten years of turmoil in which many people suffered inhuman persecution both mental and physical. In reality this "Cultural Revolution" became nothing but tragedy of relentless mutual hate and killing. Within a fairly large section of society, there was no peace between people, no feeling, no warmth. Even fathers and mothers, sons and daughters became enemies.

At the time of the Cultural Revolution I had not even graduated from primary school. But like everybody else my age I was attracted by the philosophy of struggle that was propagated at that time. I thought that becoming a revolutionary young person meant that I had to take a definite political standpoint. My father and mother had taken part in the revolution when they were young, they were loyal Party members and had responsible jobs in a government department. Like so many other Party members they were criticized and struggled against. Loyal and naive as I was, I took a Cultural Revolution standpoint, "drew a clear line" between my parents and myself and opposed them.

In early 1980, introduced by a friend's father, I went to a newly opened church for the first time. I had never met Christians before. The love and care they showed for others impressed me deeply. While I was in this church I felt embraced by this love around me. It was as if I had come home. It happened that the message the minister brought that Sunday was about people's reconciliation with God. "Reconciliation." "being born again," these words were at that time so fresh and new to me that they moved my heart. I felt as if I was drawn in by the power of an intense love, guiding me to pursue this completely new experience - this was a turning round, a throwing myself into God's love, admitting my sin to God and being reconciled to him.

I believe that many of you here today, brothers and sisters, have had a similar experience: Once we have become reconciled with God, we are moved by the love of God to desire reconciliation with others. I myself underwent this kind of experience. After I became a Christian, the first strong yearning that grew in me was the desire to be reconciled with my mother. The Cultural Revolution had destroyed our feelings for each other, and my mother had been deeply hurt. My one hope was to ask for her forgiveness and receive it; I hoped she would forgive her daughter who had become the victim of a political movement.

She could not forgive me, not at that time. But when we were talking on the phone once last year, my mother, for the first time, begged my forgiveness for having been unable to forgive me for such a long time - nearly nine years. On the phone, she cried, and I cried too. At the beginning of this year, unfortunately, my mother died of cancer of the liver. That I, her

daughter, cannot hasten home for her funeral, fills me with deep grief. But besides my grief I find comfort in the thought that we were reconciled before she passed away, and that there was love and not hate in her heart when she left me.

This morning, I am sharing my witness with you, sisters and brothers, because it is similar to those of many Christians in China today. It is God's saving grace that makes us, who have been sunk in sin, confess our sins to his love, that makes us repent, that reconciles us with him and then brings about reconciliation with others. If reconciliation with God was not the first step, reconciliation with other people would be hard to achieve and short-lived.

During the Cultural Revolution, many Christians found it hard to understand why God allowed churches to be closed and Christians to endure terrible persecution. They lifted their eyes to heaven and sighed, beseeching God like David in his time of great suffering: "Oh God, endless is the night, when will the morning come?" But when in 1980, after the Cultural Revolution, the churches began to reopen, we realized that the number of Christians had not decreased but had grown. Since 1980, the church in China has grown at the rate of three new churches every two days. During the Cultural Revolution, Christians enjoyed no privileges, but suffered with the masses, and this deeply impressed people around them and earned them sympathy. Therefore today people are the more willing to implement the policy of religious freedom.

Many American Christians, especially former missionaries and their children, are amazed at the resurgence and growth of the church in China. They find it hard to understand how a Chinese church, which was without missionaries or mission boards for so many years, and had even been forced to close its doors all that time, could actually revive and grow like this when it reopened. They say there is only one explanation: It's a miracle.

Indeed, this *is* a miracle, it is God's work, the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We believe "that all things work together for good for those who love God." God frequently works through the transformation of people or events, the interaction of various social factors, to guide human history forward toward the realization of reconciliation between God and people and the great plan of salvation. If we look at the situation in China in recent years from this perspective, we can see how God makes his great power manifest. People thirst for peace, they yearn to have their wounded spirits healed by love. People are so moved by the proclamation of God's love and reconciliation that they respond eagerly. Of course, the government allows Christians to enjoy religious freedom. In the last forty years, the Chinese church has implemented self-government, self-support and self-propagation and has become a church run by Chinese Christians themselves, thereby earning the goodwill of the masses. Both of these are necessary conditions arranged by God.

And it is indeed because of this that Chinese Christians' hearts are filled with gratefulness. We thank God for his special grace towards us, that he has led us through the valley of death. Because of the revival of the church, thousands and thousands of people have turned round and have become reconciled with God, thereby adding their witness to the reconciliation of God and people and God's plan of salvation.

For many years, overseas Chinese Christians have never ceased their prayers for the church and Christians in China. We are very moved by this, and we give God thanks and praise for it. Your prayer is supporting us, it encourages us and strengthens us in love.

Please continue to pray for the Chinese church and for Christians in China. Pray that God may use the Chinese church and the words and deeds of Chinese Christians to spread the good news of his love and reconciliation to our fellow Chinese. Pray that God may use the Chinese church to guide those who seek, that they may find reconciliation and love. Intercede for us, pray that the miracle of the revival of the Chinese church continues to be a witness to God's love and to his reconciliation with people.

*Tian Feng*, March 1991, pp. 4-5.

Translated by Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau.

## "He Saw and Believed" - Luo Zhenfang\*

text: John 20: 1-10

The inside front cover of the most recent issue of *The Nanjing Theological Review* (No. 11) carries a reproduction of a famous painting which shows Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved running to see that the stone had been rolled away from Jesus' tomb. Mary Magdalene says: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb. and we do not know where they have laid him." For this reason, some Bible commentators believe that because she saw that the stone had been rolled away, Mary Magdalene might have thought that someone had stolen Jesus' body and that is why she reported the news to the two disciples. Whatever our speculations, the fact before us is that Jesus' tomb is empty, so the two disciples race to the tomb in order to find out the true facts of the matter.

In the account given in the Gospel of John, after denying Jesus three times, Peter temporarily disappears. Peter has fallen as he follows the Lord. When he remembers the Lord telling him that he will deny him three times before the cock crows, he goes out and weeps bitterly. Though he has denied Christ three times, he has not come to the point of selling out the Lord or his friends. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Though Peter acts out of weakness at times, he loves the Lord in his heart. So when he hears the news of Jesus' empty tomb from Mary Magdalene, his heart, full of love for the Lord, blazes into flame. He finds a new kind of strength which impels him to run towards the Lord's tomb.

Peter is a mirror of each one of us. Like him, we all have our weaknesses. After he has fallen, Peter does not give up on himself w hopelessly, but is able to turn back from his mistaken path. Thus the Lord still entrusts to him the great task of shepherding the sheep. As we go along the Lord's path, there will be places where we may fall places where we may go against the Lord; this is unavoidable. But if we, like Peter, realize our errors and mend our ways, the Lord will forgive us.

In the story which this passage narrates, Peter plays only a supporting role. The main part belongs to the disciple whom the Lord loves, John. With the character of Peter as foil, the image of John is the more striking, the more lofty. The important verse here is the eighth: "Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed." The church has endured the vicissitudes of its two-thousand-year history and has increased in the vitality of life in the Lord because it is built upon the cornerstone of this faith, the resurrection of Jesus. This verse of scripture tells us that the disciple whom Jesus loved was the first person in this world to believe in Jesus' resurrection.

There is quite a story to this disciple whom Jesus loved; in the Gospel of John, he appears five times. On the last night of Jesus' life, John rested his head in the Lord's bosom. It was through him that Peter asked Jesus who it was who sold him and Jesus revealed the name. At this time,

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none of the other disciples knew. After Jesus was arrested, all the other disciples fled; only this disciple whom Jesus loved followed him closely right up to the foot of the cross. What distressed Jesus most was the fact that, when he left this world, his mother would have no one to watch over her, because at that time his brothers did not believe in him. Finally, from the cross, Jesus gave his mother into the care of this disciple whom he loved, John. So John took her into his own home. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to seven disciples on the shores of Lake Tiberius. At first, none of them recognized him; the first one to do so, again, was John. Later as this disciple described his experience, he said: "... because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God; for God is love" (1 Jn. 4:7-8).

When Peter and John heard Mary Magdalene's news, the two of them ran together to the tomb. John got there first but did not go in, he just saw the linen cloths which had bound Jesus body lying there. Then Peter arrived and entered. He saw the linen cloths lying there and the napkin which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in another place. Peter did not yet believe that Jesus was risen.

"Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed." What was it he saw? He saw the linen cloths and the napkin that had bound Jesus' head lying there neatly. The fourth-century commentator John Chrysostom commented on this: "If someone had stolen the body of Jesus, they would not have left the linen grave cloths behind; if someone had come to steal the body of Jesus, they wouldn't have gone to the trouble of removing the napkin from the head and then rolling it up and putting it to one side. What would they have done? They would certainly have made off with the body of Jesus, bound in the grave cloths just as they had found it. John had told us that Jesus was buried with a great quantity of spices which were tightly bound to Jesus' body with fine linen cloths."

Paul says: "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). After the Lord Jesus' resurrection, his physical body became a spiritual body. Thus when the disciples gathered in the tightly locked room, the resurrected Lord appeared in their midst. On the basis of the original Greek text, some commentators believe that Jesus' body underwent a spiritual transformation and emerged from the linen cloths, so that the cloths lay there just as if they yet bound a physical body. The napkin was still rolled as if around a head, lying in the spot where Jesus' head would have been. When the disciple whom Jesus loved saw all this evidence at the scene, and remembered that while he had been alive Jesus had three times foretold his suffering and resurrection, he believed.

A second-century father of the church compared the Gospel of John to an eagle, the bird which flies the highest and sees the farthest. The disciple whom Jesus loved was like that. His heart, filled with love for the Lord, caused his faith to take an unprecedented leap, and he was the first to believe in the Lord's resurrection. He tells us: "No one has ever seen God, except that his only son in the bosom of the father reveals him to him." Jesus came into the world as a witness to God the Father because he was his beloved only Son in the bosom of the father. The disciple John witnessed beautifully to Jesus. This is because he also was the disciple whom Jesus loved, who rested in his bosom.

May the mercy of the Lord once again draw us in, leading us into the depths of life in the Lord, so that we may rest closely in his bosom; and, receiving from on high the news of Jesus' resurrection, take it to the ends of the earth.

translated by Janice Wicked.

## Why Jesus Christ Died on the Cross - Han Bide\*

"No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (John 10:18).

The potential causes of death people face in today's world are basically of three types:

Natural death. When our life span is complete, we die of old age. This is in accordance with the universal laws of nature.

Various factors which cause life to be taken from us, such as a) war; wars are as old as human history. It is not necessary to look back very far; recent history is bad enough. More than ten million people died in World War I. World War II took more than thirty million lives. b) Natural disasters; How many lives are taken every year by floods and earthquakes! The Tangshan earthquake in 1976 took over 200,000 lives. c) Racism, the shame of humankind. Hitler's racism took the lives of six million Jews. Sadly, racism continues its tyranny today and is still taking people's lives. d) Unscrupulous killings by violent groups. e) Diseases. f) Accidents, such as plane crashes, train collisions, derailments, perils of the sea, car accidents... g) Suicide out of despair.

Self-sacrifice for a just cause, in order to save others.

Christ's death is different from all of the types of death listed above. Was his a natural death? No. When Christ was nailed on the cross, he was just about thirty-three years old. Was his life taken? No. Jesus says: "No one takes my life from me." Divine in nature, Christ's life could not be taken (see Mt. 26:53). Was his death a self-sacrifice for a just cause, for the saving of others? Paul writes: "Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7-8). Therefore, Jesus' death was not a natural death, nor was his life taken, nor did he fight on behalf of a few people with a just cause. Christ's death on the cross obviously has a deeper meaning.

Jesus says: "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down on my own accord." The life of the son of God, the incarnate Jesus Christ, was taken by no one and nothing; he died because he "laid down his life on his own accord". While holding all life in his hands, the Lord gives up sovereignty over his own, surrenders willingly to the cross, and lays down his holy and precious life. Why does he do that?

The early church did not grasp right away that Christ's life was not taken away from him but rather laid down by him. As we can see from the book of Acts, the early church put the blame for Christ's crucifixion on those who acted it out: "the hands of those outside the law" (Acts 2:23); that is, the powerful and influential clique of High Priest, chief priests, elders and Pilate, plus the ignorant masses who went along with them, shouting: "Away with him! Away with

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him! Crucify him!" All of them killed Jesus, they were the ones who took Christ's life (see Acts 3:13-15, 4:10, 5:30, 7:1.51-52, 10:39).

A look at what the church preached in those early times, bears witness to this conclusion. Standard subjects of sermons in the early church were the following: first, Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah whose coming was foretold through the prophets (Acts 2:30, 36, 3:18, 22-24, 9:20, 22, 13:23); second, Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:24, 32, 3:15, 4:10, 5:31-32, 10:40-41, 13:29-39); third, Jesus' second coming and his judgment over the living and the dead (Acts 3:20-21, 10:42, 17:30-31). Of course the selection of these topics is related to fact that in the early church the congregations were mainly made up of Jewish people.

With the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles, the concept of human sin ceased to be restricted to a Jewish understanding, that is: the disbelief in Jesus as the Christ. Sin became more widely understood as not knowing the only God, worshipping empty idols, and as ethical deprivation, all of which made salvation necessary. The son of God, Jesus Christ, died for the sin of all people on earth, thereby revealing God's love. He died in order to save all humanity, giving himself willingly on the cross. Thus emerged the Christian teaching of salvation, which is based on the familiar confession: "He loves me, he died for me." In the later letters of Paul as well as in those New Testament books and epistles written by other apostles, Jesus' death is interpreted as a self-sacrifice out of love, as something richer and deeper in meaning than a misfortune by which his life was simply "taken away."

Christ's death is a sacrifice made out of love, most perfectly expounded in Paul's letter to the Philippians. There, in chapter 2, verses 5 to 8, Paul writes: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross." He became humble and obedient, he laid his life down: this is the essence, the root of God's love for humankind.

It makes all the difference in the world whether a life is taken away or laid down by oneself. What does the taking away of lives do to the world? It causes nothing but fear, sorrow, pain, suffering and desperation. But when a person lays down his life of his own accord, the world becomes enriched with the encouragement of love, with life, salvation and hope. Jesus' self-denial conveys a wonderful message: Love has the power to move God to a point where he willingly gives himself up to the cross and denies himself for the sins of all people. Jesus Christ has already done this. How shall humanity, the pinnacle of all creation, respond?

Since Jesus Christ was nailed on the cross up until today, people have pondered this question in their hearts. It has and continues to awaken the world, calling upon people to make Christ's sacrificial love part of their lives, their work and relations with others. Only in this is there hope for the world. For nearly two thousand years, countless believers have adhered to the teaching of Jesus, who said: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mt. 16:24). They have striven to take Jesus' self-denial as their model and thus to awake others, to awake a world lost in slumber.

Paul shows an intimate understanding of this when he writes: "The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). "Urging" in this context means more than mere encouragement. Paul is commanded by Christ's love. He surrenders control over his life to Christ so that he is completely ruled by Christ's self-denying love. Hence, Paul no longer lives for himself, but for Christ alone. Paul does not care about his reputation, he does not mind tribulation, poverty, or even death, as long as only Christ is always exalted in his body. "To me," Paul writes, "life is Christ" (Phil. 1:20-21). Paul wants Christ's death and self-sacrifice to be reproduced in his own body. As you can see, Paul deepens his understanding of this self-denying love the older he grows, becoming increasingly Christ-like in every aspect of his life.

But through and after the "laying down," there is also a "taking up." This is another truth of Christ's self-sacrifice. Exactly because he consented to give up sovereignty over his life and sacrificed himself on the cross for the sins of humankind, he also had the power to take his life up again - to rise from the dead and to ascend to heaven, where he is now sitting at the right hand of God. Christ has taken up not only his own life, but also "the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. I : 18). And ever after, sin and death can never again rule over humankind. The risen Christ will bestow on the world love, new life and the fullness of God's grace. Just as Psalm 68, verse 18 says: "You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train and receiving gifts from people, even from those who rebel against the Lord God's abiding there"(see Eph. 4:8).

It is *because* Christ willingly laid down his own life that "God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"(Phil. 2:9-11).

May each of us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deepen our understanding of the truth and meaning of Christ's death and bear witness to it!

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Translated by Gotthard Oblau.

## **A Whole Person: Reflections on the Gospel of Luke - Xu Sixue**

Each of the four gospels emphasizes a different aspect of time. In the Gospel of Matthew emphasis is on the past, and the word "fulfillment" appears no fewer than sixty-five times. This frequency illustrates how many of the events in the life of Jesus fulfill Old Testament prophecies. In the Gospel of Mark emphasis is on the present. Mark refers to Jesus as servant, so that he is portrayed as taking part in the everyday realities of life. In the Gospel of Luke, emphasis is on the future. Mortals should think about the life to come and not be all-absorbed in the pursuit of earthly happiness; they should prepare for the life to come. In the Gospel of John particular the emphasis is on eternity. If we wish to enter into eternal happiness, we must be reborn, thereby gaining God's eternal life, becoming children of the heavenly Father; only then can we join in the eternal joy of the heavenly family.

A person's life on earth is so short that it has to be motivated by lofty aims and far-reaching ideals. The author writes of Jesus as a true person, a whole person. He is both Son of Man and Son of God; Son of God, yet Son of Man. The Gospel of Luke is based on detailed investigation and the account is set out in an orderly fashion, so that its readers should know their beliefs to be grounded on concrete evidence of actual events.

### **The Author**

The author of this Gospel, the doctor, Luke, is believed by a number of biblical scholars to have been Greek. In the New Testament there are three references to Luke (Col. 4:14, 2 Tim. 4:11, Philemon 24). Paul calls Luke "our dear friend Luke, the doctor". In Paul's Letter to Timothy, reference is made to the fact that, "apart from Luke I have no one with me." Luke was not only a doctor; he was also a highly accomplished writer. The language used in his Gospel is beautiful; in terms of literary value, the Gospel of Luke can be rated highest among the four Gospels. In his writing he employs both medical and nautical terms. In his Book of Acts he uses "we" on a number of occasions to refer to himself, the disciple Paul and others. On the disciple Paul's first and second missionary journeys, Luke worked with him. Later, the disciple Paul awaited trial in Caesarea, and two years later he traveled by boat to Rome to be tried. Throughout these years of hardship and testing, Luke never left Paul. We can see how Luke sacrificed himself, body and mind, and loved the Lord with zeal and devotion. Luke was one of the first European believers; he was also one of the first European missionaries. He worked with Paul and was of great assistance to him. His dedicated service to the Lord's work had a great impact on the Church in Europe.

Since the Gospel of Mark can be seen as a detailed account of Peter's teaching in Cornelius' home, there is a particularly close relationship between the Gospel of Mark and Peter. Likewise it can be said that there is an extremely close relationship between the Gospel of Luke and Paul, since several fundamental beliefs such as the forgiveness of sin, and justification by faith, also appear in Paul's letters. Luke the doctor was a faithful companion and fellow worker of Paul, standing by Paul to spread the Gospel through thick and thin, through life and death.

This book was written by Luke between A.D. 58-60 (or A.D. 63-68) while in Caesarea, where he was with Paul for two years. It was during this period that Luke also carried out his detailed investigation into the life of Jesus Christ on earth, finding authentic evidence gained from first-hand accounts. Later on he made an orderly narrative out of these accounts which form the Gospel of Luke as we know it now.

### **Intended Readership**

This book was particularly written with the Greek people in mind. The Jesus whom Luke describes is a true and whole person. His criteria far surpassed the highest ideals espoused by the Greeks. In his Gospel Luke writes of one who was both human and divine, just as the disciple John writes of one who was both divine and human, because Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God; a man who was God, God who was also man. For example, Jesus falling asleep in the stern of the boat is an illustration of his humanity; his awaking to calm the storm is an illustration of his divinity. His taking part in the wedding feast at Cana illustrates his humanity; his changing water into wine there illustrates his divinity. His asking for a drink of water from a Samaritan woman, illustrates his humanity; that he wants to give people the water of everlasting life so that they never thirst again, illustrates that he is God. Luke draws our attention to Jesus' perfect humanity in order to reveal his divine nature. Jesus is God's standard for humanity. If we cannot meet this standard, we cannot be acceptable in God's sight.

Luke was an educated person and his main aim in writing was to witness to Jesus Christ to the educated strata of society. Theophilus was a government official, ("Theo" means "God" and "philus," "love". Put together they mean "love comes from God," and "one who loves God"). To lead learned and erudite people of some standing in society such as Theophilus to belief in the Lord and give them a solid foundation in faith meant producing concrete evidence. So it was that in his introduction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Luke writes "after investigating everything carefully from the very first (I decided) to write an orderly account" for people of his day who were in need of salvation.

"Investigating in detail" for Luke meant verifying that that which he learned about had all been observed first-hand (Luke 1:2), and that its truth had been witnessed through revelation. In the same way, the disciple Paul learned of the establishing of the Last Supper from the eleven disciples, but he also received a revelation from the Lord (I Cor. 11:23) verifying the disciples' information. And the source of their message was that higher authority.

We can gather from the sentence, "that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed" that Theophilus had already been converted, but that this new life was insufficiently experienced, and his faith not firmly enough established; and that he needed further guidance and assistance to deepen his life in the Spirit, to lead him from immature to mature faith, from growth to experience and to being more deeply rooted in Jesus Christ.

Culture, the arts and philosophy were all relatively well developed in Greece; it was certainly necessary to produce hard evidence to destroy the resistance present in many different areas

of learning, and to get people to accept Jesus completely -not only his principles, but also the marvelous fact of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Luke is highly structured, and the textual research precise. Contemporary research into ancient history also confirms that Luke's record corresponds remarkably to historical events of the day.

### **Special Features**

Luke's narrative has some quite unusual features due to his bearing witness in particular to the Greeks, who were outside the scope of Jewish life.

The Gospel of Matthew describes Jesus as a king who will one day come to save his people from their sins. The Gospel of Mark records how the Son of God, Jesus, has come to serve humanity. If we are to become God's servants today, first of all we must be born again as sons and daughters of God; only then can we serve well. Luke, on the other hand, emphasizes Jesus as a true and whole person. Moved by the Holy Spirit, Paul saw only two persons in the whole course of world history. The first was Adam, and the second Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:46-47). Not long after being created, the first Adam sinned and fell; he did not have the chance to bring his humanity to completion. From this point of view, therefore, there has only been one truly whole person in this world, and that is Jesus Christ. Luke is therefore describing this truly whole person, especially for the intellectual classes, to facilitate calling them to accept his life and follow his example, so as to become truly whole persons acceptable in God's sight.

"For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). This verse can be understood as a key to the Gospel of Luke.

Through detailed investigation, an orderly account of events, study and silent meditation on Jesus Christ's glorious life, Luke wants Theophilus to submit mind, body and spirit to the process of integral growth following in the example of the Lord Jesus, and so to reveal God's glory, and to witness to God through his life.

Now let us take a further look at the special features of the Gospel of Luke and so increase our understanding.

1. Not only is Jesus the Messiah of the Jews, he is also the Savior of all humanity who came in search of everyone in the world who was lost, for example:

a) When Jesus was born, the angels solemnly announced to the shepherds in the wilderness: "Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

b) In praise of the Lord, Simeon says: "(he is) a light for revelation of the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32).

c) When Jesus was being baptized, he said in his prophecy: "and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6).

d) The Lord uses the examples of the widow at Sarepta in Sidon, Naaman, commander of the army of the King of Syria, and the leper who had been healed to show God's care for outcasts (Luke 4:25- 27).

e) The Lord praises the faith of a Roman officer (Luke 7:1-10).

f) The Lord uses examples like the good Samaritan and the ten lepers to praise outcasts (Luke 10:25-30, Luke 17:11-19), illustrating that all the people of the world come under God's care.

2. The Lord is God in Heaven and a person on earth; this is another important strand within the Gospel of Luke.

a) The book's genealogy is that of the Lord's mother Mary, starting from humanity's earliest ancestor, Adam, proceeding generation by generation down to Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father. The sentence, "Joseph was Heli's son" is not referring to a relationship of blood, but one of marriage, because in fact Joseph was Heli's son-in-law. This all illustrates that Jesus Christ was the Word made flesh, the Son of Man.

The Gospel of Matthew states that Joseph was Jacob's son, but the Gospel of Luke states that Joseph was Heli's son. As a result of detailed analysis we know that Joseph could not have been either Jacob's or Heli's son. We should note that the Gospel of Luke does not state that Heli was Joseph's biological father, so that we can ascertain that Joseph was Heli's son-in-law. We should also note that "Heli's son" does not occur in the original manuscript of the Gospel. The word "son" has been added by translators.

The Gospel of Matthew uses the genealogy of Mary's husband, Joseph in order to illustrate Jesus' relationship to the people of Israel. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus Christ's human genealogy is traced back to King David and to Adam, the earliest ancestor of humankind. This is an expression of Jesus' relationship to the whole of humankind. In the Gospel of Matthew, King David's pedigree is traced right through from Solomon to Joseph, showing how Jesus Christ is indeed a legitimate descendant of King David. The Gospel of Luke traces Mary's ancestors back to another of David's sons, Jonathan, to illustrate that Jesus is a flesh and blood descendant of David. The Gospel of Luke doesn't mention Mary, but instead mentions that Joseph is the son-in-law of Mary's father, Heli. Reference is made to Joseph as Heli's son.

The Gospel of Luke concludes the genealogy with the words "Adam was God's son." Adam was the beginning of humanity's life in the flesh; and Jesus was the beginning of humanity's life in the spirit.

b) Much mention is made in this book of the way Jesus takes pity on and shows compassion for the poor and victims of discrimination and oppression. For example the shepherds are the first people whom the angels tell of the good news of Jesus' coming to earth (Luke 2:9). When the Lord's ministry begins he solemnly declares: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18), and "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). When the woman who was a sinner came before the Lord weeping bitterly, confessing she had sinned and repenting of those sins, the Lord extended to her forgiveness of her sins (Luke 7:36-50). The Lord went to the home of the tax collector, Zacchaeus, a man looked down on by other people. (Zacchaeus was indeed a camel who went through the eye of a needle (Luke 19:1-9)). The Lord frequently spent time with those whom society spurned. At the same time, on many occasions the Lord admonishes the rich or the proud (Luke 12:13-34, 16:19-31, 18:10-14).

c) This book also contains descriptions of the Lord's great love for sinner. There are, for example, the parables recorded in chapter 15 of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. These three parables bring into prominence the combined action of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The parable of the lost sheep shows the Lord as a good shepherd. The parable of the lost coin illustrates the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit in prompting people to recognize themselves as sinners. The parable of the lost son illustrates how the heavenly Father offers complete forgiveness and loving acceptance to the repentant sinner.

When the Lord was nailed to the cross he delivered the repentant thief who was crucified with him (Luke 23:39-43). The Lord petitioned the father specially through prayer on behalf of those nailing him to the cross, begging the heavenly Father to forgive them and pardon them the severity of their sin (Luke 23:34, 39-43).

d) It is in the Gospel of Luke that four of Christianity's precious songs of praise have been recorded. These are the famous Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55); Zechariah's Benedictus (1:67-79); Simeon's Nunc Dimittis (2:29-33); and the song of praise of the heavenly host of angels (Luke 2:10-14).

e) The Gospel of Luke makes special reference to the Lord Jesus' loving and favorable treatment of women; women such as Elizabeth, the holy mother Mary, Martha of Bethany, Mary, the woman at the banquet, and the weeping woman on the street. The Lord made a point of speaking with the women of Jerusalem. All four gospels record how, very early on the day of the Lord's resurrection there were some women who went to the grave, but Luke records the event differently from the other three evangelists. The latter record the first group of women as consisting of Mary of Magdala, another Mary, and Salome; cannot whereas the second group of women was larger, and Luke alone includes all the women from the two groups (Luke 24:1, 10).

### **Divisions of the Book**

"Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17).

1. People considered Jesus a descendant of humanity's first ancestor, Adam (Luke 3:23,38). Like us he also had family relationships and responsibilities similar to those everyone has to bear. In the same way as we are, he was baptized because he lived according to the law. (In the

first chapter of the Gospel of Luke mention is made of Elizabeth, the sister-in-law of Mary, Jesus' biological mother.)

2. "... one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15) and Luke 4:1-13. Luke observes Satan's trials from a human point of view. Satan challenges the first Adam; the first Adam cannot stand his ground with him and is hugely defeated. Once again he takes up an even fiercer offensive against the second Adam, but ends up by being defeated at the hands of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. The first Adam's defeat implicated all humanity, since we all became sinners. As a result of the second Adam's victory, the way of grace was opened to the whole of humanity, and eternal life was offered to all those who believed in him.

3. "(not) unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15, Luke 4:14-19, 27).

The Gospel of Luke records many details of the Lord Jesus' life, showing how the Lord loved and cared for the whole of humanity, rather than only having regard for the well-being and destiny of the Jewish people. Despite the Lord's outstanding intelligence and wisdom, he nevertheless showed great pity on those suffering and in misery. To people in every sort of distress and going through many different kinds of suffering, be they degenerate and looked down on (Luke 5:27-39, 7:36-37), bereaved (Luke 7:11-13, 8:42, 9:38), devoid of hope and full of grief (Luke 7:19-23, or sick (Luke 4:38-41, 5:12-13), the Lord offers the deepest sympathy and help. As we read these stories today we are still very moved and helped by them for the human emotions expressed in Luke's narrative of these incidents are (feel) and genuine.

In this section of scripture we can also follow the way the Lord prayed; whatever difficulties he meets in life, he expresses his absolute faith in God (Luke 3:2, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18 & 29, 11:1-2). Through prayer he gains strength from Heaven to cope with whatever circumstances present themselves.

At the same time we see how the Lord Jesus is an adept communicator who enjoys contact with all sorts of people, and he receives whoever seeks him (Luke 7:36, 9:37, 14:1, 19:7). The Lord may be God's son, but he is still amiable and approachable, frequently spending time in the midst of the masses, living a life on earth as God and person, treating people with justice, and everywhere manifesting his heavenly glory (Luke 9:28-36). When he goes up the mountain and is transfigured, his holy and pure appearance is made manifest and it is a source of divine joy and human amazement.

4. The Lord helps and saves us as if we were his own close friends (Luke 19:28-33).

a) The Lord weeps as a patriot would over the holy city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). This was because at that time his nation, from politics to religion, was irretrievably corrupt.

b) As a human being he needed the help of the angels to accept the suffering of the cross, to which end he gained strength through prayer. It was an intense spiritual battle, and from his human standpoint Jesus needed assistance from heaven to triumph over Satan's power and influence.

c) He diligently fulfilled his own obligations in the way one would expect of a close relative (Lev. 25:47-55, Ruth 3:10-18, 4:110). Not only is he our next of kin, but also our beloved Savior.

5. After the Lord rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, he still bore human characteristics (Luke 24).

It is a source of great wonderment that after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, not only were his human characteristics still present, they were also there for all to see.

a) When the Lord appeared to his disciples after he had risen from the dead he still had his human form. "While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence" (Luke 24:36-43).

After the Lord had risen from the dead he still had human form, the implication being that his nature was still authentically human. This is extremely important to all those who belong to him. On the one hand it says that he ascended into highest heaven and, on our behalf, appeared before the Father. On the other hand it expresses that the Lord, having ascended into heaven, still cares for our weakness, and can therefore act as a mediator and a high priest before the Father praying for us unceasingly, presenting our needs before the Father, and conveying the Father's blessing on us.

b) After the Lord rose from the dead, in addition to making several sudden appearances to the disciples, he also walked and talked with two of the disciples on their way to Emmaus.

c) When the Lord appeared to the disciples in a house in Jerusalem and asked them to touch him it was evident that, having risen from the dead, he was still fully human.

d) As the Lord blessed the disciples he was carried up into heaven. "Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God" (Luke 24:50-53).

Throughout these passages the Lord's bearing expresses a symbolic period of grace. It is a period of grace when the resurrected and ascended Lord gives a spiritual blessing to those who are his. In Old Testament times blessings were expressed in terms of material wellbeing, given to those who followed God's commandments (Deut. 28:1-15). When the Kingdom has arrived, material and spiritual blessings will be joined together.

After the Lord blessed the disciples with uplifted hands he parted from them and was carried up to heaven, leaving behind him on earth the unfathomable good fortune of grace, peace, joy and blessings for all those who had received grace and redemption to the full.

We should note that this book begins joyfully with the two songs of praise in chapter one (the Magnificat and Zechariah's Benedictus). The book also ends joyfully and with a blessing. This great grace of peace and joy through grace is linked with Jesus Christ coming to earth and enduring death, then rising from the dead and ascending into heaven for us. The Lord is the source of our peace and joy, and is the guarantee on which we can depend.

### **Special Points to Note**

1. Luke 15 contains three important parables which reveal some very significant things about the role and work of each person of the Trinity, these are extremely important revelations which can considerably enlighten us in our quest for salvation.

a) The parable of the lost sheep is a symbol of the holy Son Jesus as the good shepherd for whom no trouble is too great to bear in the course of looking for lost sheep. Having found a lost sheep, he carries it on his shoulders, even invites friends and neighbors to come and share in his joy. This gives us an insight into the joy there is in heaven when on earth one sinner repents.

b) The parable of the lost coin. The good shepherd finds his lost sheep in the wilderness. The parable of the lost coin takes place in a home. It symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit. "Lighting the lamp" is a reference to the words of God; "sweeping out the house" is a reference to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in making people acknowledge their sins, repent and be forgiven. Were it not for the enlightenment and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a person would not see himself as a sinner and could not receive the Lord.

c) The parable of the prodigal son illustrates the love and acceptance which the heavenly Father offers to the repentant sinner. In chapter 15, Luke depicts God as a merciful heavenly Father. A sinner has only to become aware of wanting to return home for God to reveal a constant and unconditional love. This parable is linked to the two earlier parables to illustrate how the Trinitarian God is working separately yet in unity, each person mutually complementing the others.

2. The dishonest steward (Luke 16:1-13). This passage of scripture is difficult to explain; there are as many different understandings of it as there are biblical scholars. In particular, the problem of: "use your worldly wealth to win friends for yourselves" is difficult for people to understand. Proceeding in a spirit of truth, we shall now take a look at Christ's teaching on economics.

a) During one's lifetime a person should plan not only for the present life but also for the life to come. A person's life on earth is like that of a traveler; one's time is limited, and it is an unthinking person who plans only for their present life without considering the life to come.

One's current life of happiness and bitterness is very short; the happiness and bitterness of one's life to come is eternal, limitless, and doesn't correspond to a time of ease and leisure.

b) Christians are God's stewards in this world. This being the case, when the time comes for us to leave this world, then true to our duty, we have to settle the account with the Lord. There will come a time when everything we have done, be it good or evil, will be revealed before Christ's throne and the Lord will pass fair judgment on a person's conduct and actions.

c) Our money and property have all come from the Lord, we have been entrusted with it by God. We need to handle the Lord's property correctly, and not treat as our own that which is the Lord's. God's property should be used for God: this is one of the concrete expressions of Christians' faithfulness.

d) That which we own in this life has been entrusted to us by God only the future reward will really belong to us, which is to say only if we indeed give up everything to the Lord now, can the Lord in the life to come, bestow on us that which is really ours (Matt. 19:23-29).

e) The Lord commended the steward for his astuteness and not for his dishonesty. The passage of scripture says: "And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light" (Luke 16:8). Being shrewd means being both far-sighted and forward thinking; current opportunities can be used to make a solid foundation for the future, in the same way as the wealth one has in one's present life can be transformed into wealth in the eternal life to come. The aim of a person's life on earth is not to revere riches above all else, but rather to use riches to revere God.

f) After dying the rich man will suffer, not because he owned a lot, but because of his selfishness and his refusal to use his money to help others and revere God. After Lazarus dies he will rest in the blessedness of Abraham's embrace, not because of his poverty, but because his poverty leads him to put his whole trust in God, looking to God for guidance and having an unshakable faith. So that at his end he received God's blessing and favor and was received into the embrace of his trusted father Abraham.

g) Dishonest property refers to property on earth; it does not refer to dishonest means of acquiring property. Wealth itself is not a sin; the sin is in treating as one's own that which God has entrusted to one, or being greedy about one's wealth. The Bible does not say that wealth is the root of all evil but does say that greed for wealth is the root of all evil.

3. The fire brought to the earth by the Lord. The Lord said: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49). If we take a comprehensive look at this passage of scripture and put it in context, we can understand that the fire here referred to is the fire of judgment. On the cross, the Lord was punished and tried in our place; in making the supreme sacrifice of shedding his blood to atone for our sins, he completed the task of salvation. For all those who have been saved, this becomes the loving fire of the cross. The good news of the Lord's salvation is to be spread throughout the world; there are those who believe it, those who don't believe it, and those who

oppose it, as a result of these difference, disputes will inevitably arise. Even within a family, division can occur on the grounds of faith.

Fire here also refers to hardship. The Lord suffered to save humanity; in following the being dedicated to the Lord and spreading the gospel, the disciples also suffered. This sort of suffering can be called a baptism of fire.

4. The question of the Nether World: Luke 16 raises the question of the place of darkness; the Greek word for it is "Hades," meaning the world which hasn't yet been seen, its well as the place people go after death and before resurrection. From the account in this passage of scripture, the Nether World is described as the place where peoples' souls reside after death. "The Nether World" is its collective name, but it is divided in two parts: for the just and for the evil, and there is a great impassable gulf between. Paradise, or Abraham's embrace, is where the just are sent. The evil are in the place of suffering and punishment. The place where evil people are sent has remained unchanged through the ages. In the future before the great white throne there will be people handed over to be punished. But the place of the just has changed, since the place itself has been moved. The Lord Jesus said to the thief on the cross who repented: "Truly I tell you: today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). When the Lord died, paradise had not yet moved, but by the disciple Paul's time, paradise had very clearly already moved to the third heaven. Some biblical scholars believe that the move is described in the letter to the Ephesians 4:4-8. The original passage of scripture reads: "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people" (Eph. 4:8). The next part refers to him descending to the lowest parts, down to the very earth, which is referring to the paradise of the just. 2 Pet. 3:19 mentions that the Lord Jesus' risen soul descends to the place of darkness to make a proclamation. (Please note that it wasn't that he went to preach to the evil ones to repent, but that he went to make a solemn proclamation.) From that time onwards, he took the paradise of the just with him up to heaven.

That which is emphasized in the Gospel of Luke is that the Lord Jesus is a true and whole person. On the one hand it is saying that Jo Christ is the only one in the whole universe and in the whole history of humanity who is qualified to be its savior. At the same time it is saying that the life of the Lord Jesus has left us with a holy, flawless and glorious pattern to emulate; we are called to depend on his power, learn from him and seek to be a whole person; living out a noble life, a lifetime on earth which is pure, holy, and beautiful.

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