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CHINESE THEOLOGICAL REVIEW 1986

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Editor's Note

In his preface to the Chinese Theological Review, 1985, K.H. Ting reflected upon the theme of unity in the Chinese Protestant experience.

"We have not found that this unity results in stagnation. It is this new, unprecedented width in the range of Christian oneness, brought to reality as "ecumenicals" became more evangelical and "evangelicals" became more ecumenical in the last thirty years, that I think is the growing edge of Chinese theological renewal and deserves more attention and thanksgiving."

Unity continues to be a major emphasis in the materials selected for this 1986 edition. It is a unity given width and breadth by the diverse traditions Chinese Christians have inherited from their past. At the same time it is a powerful symbol which calls the Christian community in China to new ways of responding and thinking theologically. Many of the articles and sermons included here focus on the concept of unity, what it has meant to Chinese Protestants over the past thirty years and what problems still stand in the way of its full realization. They attest to Bishop Ting's observation that unity in the Chinese context is far from stagnant, but rather developing in response to "the right of Christians of all sorts to be equally regarded, of our responsibility to keep Christians of all sorts within the common bond of fellowship, and of the importance of staying close to and reflecting and molding the constituency given to us."

Nor is unity a concept closed within the boundaries of the Christian community. Two pieces, "On the Appreciation of Christian Art," and "In Search of the Dove," illustrate concrete ways in which Christians, aware of themselves as members of the larger society, seek ways to respond and contribute something new to that society. The particular ways in which Chinese Protestants bear witness beyond the church have implications for theological discussions in other parts of the world. The author of the first article, Mr. He Qi, is art instructor at Nanjing Theological Seminary. In his article, Mr. He calls for an integrated, open approach to the wider world of Christian art as well as for continuing and greater efforts at indigenization. Many friends of the church in China may already be familiar with the paper cuts and calendar art produced by Chinese Christian artists. We are especially pleased to be able to include a number of color plates showing both paper cuts and ink and wash paintings on Christian themes.

"In Search of the Dove," expresses well-known author Cheng Naishan's views on her dual role as writer and Christian. One of her recent short stories, "Hong Taitai," is included to give the reader an example of the way in which her work reflects her understanding of faith. The story has been reprinted courtesy of the Ta Kung Pao English Weekly Supplement, Hong Kong, in which the translation first appeared.

With this volume, the focus of the Review has been limited to a single year, that of 1985-86, with materials taken from the journal of Nanjing Theological Seminary, the "Nanjing Theological Review," the monthly Christian magazine, "Tian Feng," published in Shanghai by the National Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the periodical "Sermon Collections," published by the Zhejiang Christian Council in Hangzhou. The selection process is unavoidably subjective, reflecting the editor's choice among a great array of possibilities. I am grateful to Philip Wickeri for his advice and assistance in making selections. Though an effort is made to include church documents and important statements, the contents do not reflect any attempt to be comprehensive.

Pinyin romanization has been used throughout except where another form is more familiar or is known to be a personal preference. All Biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version. A brief identification of the authors will be found at the back of the book.

I would like to express my thanks to the authors of the articles and sermons presented here, for generously sharing their work with us and for their enthusiastic support for this volume. Not all have had the opportunity to see the translations prior to publication and the editor must take responsibility for any errors in translation or in interpretation of the authors' intentions.

I would also like to thank Rev. Marvin Hoff and Joanne Hoff of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia for their encouragement and assistance in seeing this project through publication and distribution. Thanks are also due to the other translators: Philip L. Wickeri, Katie Tute, Jill Hughes, Rev. Ewing W. Carroll, Jr., Peter Barry, M.M., Craig Moran and Kenneth J. Guest and to Mrs. Margaret Allen who once again helped in proofreading the manuscript. The fine photographs are the work of Ms. Gail V. Coulson.

Janice K. Wickeri
Advent 1986
Hong Kong

1. Open Letter from the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference

To our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

May the grace and peace of our Father God and of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon you.

Thanks be to the Lord, under the guidance of his hand, the 266 Christian representatives from 28 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions of our nation convened in the capital city of Beijing from 16-23 August, 1986, the Fourth National Christian Conference. This was a conference greatly blessed by God, showing forth the strong unity of Christians in China. Let us together offer praise and thanks to God for the success of this conference.

In March of 1980, not long after the end of the ten years of turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, when the policy of religious freedom had just been restored, the Standing Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement wrote a letter to our brothers and sisters in Christ across the nation. Many Christians sent letters in response, saying that, after the long journey through the valley of the shadow of death, they had read our letter with eyes brimming with hot tears and hearts filled with praise for God. Six years have flown by since then and as we meet this time in Beijing, we once again send our regards and good wishes to our brothers and sisters, thanking you for all your prayers for this conference; your prayers lifted us up.

After six years, we see more clearly than in the past that God's power is fully manifest in our weakness. Under the protection and guidance of the power of Christ, God has accomplished through us sacred tasks beyond our requests and expectations.

In these six years, the Three-Self Patriotic Committee and the China Christian Council have printed over two million Bibles and over 700,000 copies of 'Hymns of Praise' (Revised Edition), in which one quarter of the 400 hymns were written by our Chinese Christians; of these over half are recent compositions.

Also in these six years, the two national Christian organizations, along with Nanjing Seminary, have resumed the publication of 'Tian Feng,' and 'The Nanjing Theological Review,' have published 'Sermon Collections,' 'Theological Correspondence Course,' 'Curriculum for Lay Training Courses,' 'Manna for the Spirit,' 'Lilies of the Field,' the 'Catechism,' 'How to Study the Bible,' etc. The total number of these volumes published is in excess of four million copies. This work of providing resources has been offered up to the Lord and has received his blessing, as did the offering of the five loaves and two fishes.

Following the reopening of Nanjing Seminary in 1981, several theological schools have been opened in other cities and provinces, totaling nine schools at present. Over the course of the six years, several hundred lay refresher and training courses and spare-time theological courses have been held in these cities and provinces. Literature, lay training and theological

education complement and reinforce each other and have together brought about in our country a situation in which church work is flourishing as never before.

When we sent our 1980 letter to you, there were as yet few churches open nationwide. Today, there are over four thousand, which include a small number of newly built or enlarged churches. In addition, there are tens of thousands of meeting points. In response to the demand of our developing work, we have ordained nearly 300 ministers from across the country in recent years, of whom one-sixth have been women. In these six years, the number of people baptized by sprinkling and by immersion has continually increased. This increase in the number of people turning to God is inseparable from the witness of our Christians through words and deeds expressing love for God and humankind. Our Chinese church's adherence to three-self, and its resultant rootedness among the people have helped in furthering the spread of the gospel. The situation in the Chinese church is that of the early church in Jerusalem, "...they praised God and enjoyed the favor of the whole people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving" (Acts 2:47).

In the midst of China's socialist construction, many Christians, aiming at glorifying God and benefiting the people, have received all types of advanced-worker awards and have, in the course of carrying out the common tasks with their fellow workers, deepened their affection for them and strengthened their confidence and sense of pride in their country and people. This stimulates the growth and development of Chinese theological thinking and enables us to continually receive new light and understanding from the sacred love of God and the incarnation of Christ. During these six years our church has sent delegations to visit churches in many countries and has received a steady stream of visiting delegations from churches in other countries as well. Our Chinese church on the path of three-self has been a focus of attention and praise by the worldwide church.

Dearly beloved sisters and brothers, the achievements enumerated above are the work of God's power manifest through the Chinese church over a brief six years. As for ourselves, we have nothing to boast of except our weakness and indebtedness. We know well that there are before us many needful tasks left undone, or tasks which, though done, have not been well done.

The tasks laid before the Third National Christian Conference in 1980 were to render the Chinese church, already embarked upon the three-self path, well-administered, well-supported and well propagated. Today, the Chinese church has changed from a 'foreign religion' to a church belonging to Chinese believers ourselves, and the new historical task laid out for us is this: through our own love and service, through the work of our own hands and feet, under the guidance of God's all-powerful arm, to build up a church which is filled with the glory of God and consonant with the great new era in our country today.

This building up of the church, in the final analysis, is to enable it to be built upon the true faith, following the three-self course. This requires us servants of God to shepherd believers through the pure truth of the Bible, to enable them to progress ever forward spiritually. It requires our sisters and brothers in all times and places to offer themselves in the self-sacrificial love of Christ for all good works of benefit to society and to future

generations. We wish to strengthen our work in literature and publications and publish more spiritual and theological works commensurate with the needs of Chinese Christians, to aid them in their spiritual quest and in their study of the Bible. We want to strengthen our work of theological education in order to train evangelists who are able to shepherd and guide the flocks in matters of spirituality and true faith, holding to the three-self course, so that there may be heirs to the three-self patriotic mission initiated by the senior generation of our Chinese church.

The church must build itself up in the sacred love of Christ. The mutual forgiveness and mercy which proceeds from a loving heart is crucial to us. We entreat the Holy Spirit to pour out the love of Christ abundantly among us to bring about an atmosphere of forgiveness, reconciliation and brotherly love. Between limbs of the body which have inherited differing historical traditions, we advocate mutual communication, charity, concern and accommodation in an attitude of love and peace. In this way we can avoid a divided state of affairs as in the past.

It is our wish to develop friendly relations with churches in the regions of Hong Kong and Macau. We especially remember in our prayers the churches in Taiwan and would like to work together with them toward the early realization of the unification of the motherland. We are also happy to develop equal and friendly exchanges with Christians in churches around the world toward increased mutual understanding to bring the message of peace and harmony for all humanity throughout the globe. With regard to infiltration and harm done by anti-China forces overseas, we should be on guard as usual.

The Lord is our Shepherd. For over thirty years, he has led us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. His rod and his staff, they have comforted us. Today, we entreat God, out of his everlasting mercy and love, to grant us faith and strength to enable us to go forward along a path of love for country and church, unity and peace and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we may receive the brighter future which God has in store for the Chinese church. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forever. Amen.

The Fourth National China Christian Conference

23 August 1986, Beijing.

translated by Janice Wickeri

ARTICLES

2. Three-Self in the Context of Church History – Sun Hanshu

The Three-Self Movement of our Chinese church is over thirty years old. Practice has shown that it has been effective in leading us to cast off the label and contamination of "foreign religion," in re-establishing brotherly affection with our own people, and in making the most of our abilities and strengths in working for our nation. As a result, it has also, naturally, opened up new realms and opportunities for us to witness to Jesus Christ. Even though we have made a few mistakes in the course of the last thirty years, this has not affected the overall situation, rather it has increased our powers of 'immunity,' and given our movement an even greater vitality. In short, the Chinese church, radiant with the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the Chinese people, though it is still young, has been maturing joyfully, striding vigorously forward towards "increasing wisdom and stature" in Jesus Christ.

In the last thirty years the bulk of our time and effort has been put into the day to day life and work of this movement. We have ignored or have not had time to consider the issues of this movement in the context of church history. Most recently, and only because of enlightenment and encouragement from various quarters, we have been able to focus our attention on making a sketchy investigation of this context, thus producing a brief and basic overview of the church's development from Jerusalem outward to the rest of the world. We have found that both methods, whether finding rules of three-self in church history, or reading that history from a three self point of view, have proven very beneficial.

Among the third section of the papers entitled "Cultural Renewal" from the third plenary session of the All-African Christian Council, Lusaka, 1974, we find the following: The universal church has always manifested itself in local churches. African Christians are therefore called upon to discover how the churches in Africa can be both authentically African and at the same time an integral part of the universal church of Jesus Christ.

It gives us great pleasure to hear this, to find our thoughts are on similar lines. This is a statement of three- self. What I want to say starts here.

Whether it is possible to achieve a reasonable balance between the universality and unity of the church and its local expression and selfhood, is related to whether it is possible to maintain the health or otherwise of the church both universal and local. If we read church history again on the basis of this criterion we can roughly say that the early church (that is the church of the first five centuries) was healthy; it was the church universal expressed through the local church. Local churches such as those at Corinth, Ephesus, Rome and Alexandria, were all true churches in their own right and yet were also indivisible parts of the whole church of Jesus Christ. The sixteenth century Reformation actually came about because during the Middle Ages the papal system had distorted the universality and unity of the church to the extent of throttling the local character and selfhood of churches in various areas, thus destroying its essential reasonable balance.

Events in different areas happened to coincide, but Martin Luther led the way in breaking the fetters of the papal system and demanding the restoration of the right balance between universal and local church. The flourishing modern development of the "indigenization movement" which emerged after the First World War is actually the push for a people's church in each country. The suppression and harm caused by the missionary movement, intentional or not, nearly caused the local churches to lose their selfhood. Claims of "mother church" produced universal dissatisfaction and led to demands for the liberation of the local nature and selfhood of one's own church - for self- control. From such a reading of history, one can perhaps say that in order to ensure a reasonable balance between the universal and local church, the aim must be to guarantee the invulnerability of the local character and selfhood of the church of each country and people, and thereby reach complete liberation. Of course, the damage done by "schisms" in church history is to be detested, but that ought to be treated as a separate matter for discussion.

I. Examples of reasonable balance between universality and local character in the early church.

1. Edessa

This is a typical example of a church with its own local identity. The church of Edessa lay in the north-western part of a two-river basin, 130 miles from Antioch. Edessa was the earliest Christian church with a Syrian cultural background. There are different traditions as to when the gospel reached Edessa. One has it that the King of Edessa wrote a letter to Jesus Christ. This is the earliest Abyssinian record. Since the date is highly improbable, it must be a legend. Another tradition says that St. Thomas went there. But the most reliable evidence comes from the years 180-192 when Abgar the Eighth, King of Edessa, was on the throne. The copper coinage of the time bears his image and on his hat there is a cross. From this archeological evidence, we can infer that, towards the end of the 2nd century, Edessa had a church.

On the basis of other Abyssinian historical records and other materials, the church of Edessa had two 'firsts.' One was that it had the earliest church building. Although the Jews had temples, Christians generally met in people's homes during the time of the apostles. Unless they made use of Jewish temples, they had no church building. History records that a church next to the royal palace was once washed away by floods. This shows how early the small kingdom of Edessa had a church edifice.

Secondly, they were the first to translate the Bible from its original Hebrew and Greek texts into Syriac. According to careful research, there was already a translation of the Old Testament into Syriac even before the gospel spread to Edessa. After Abgar was converted, he oversaw the translation of the New Testament into Syriac. Thus, he was the first to have the Bible translated into a local language. The fact that this was done is a powerful expression of the local character of the church.

A church's national and regional character can be expressed in many ways, of which the translation of the Bible is one of the preeminent examples. Early on in the Protestant

movement, John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English, with the primary aim of opposing Rome. Because the Catholic Church overseas used Latin Bibles and only priests and Bishops were allowed to read them, they were able to control and rule their congregations in this way. Once the Bible had been translated into the local language, every believer could read it and the papal monopoly was shattered. Moreover, the regional nature of the church was strengthened and fetters binding people in the name of a false universalism were broken.

In addition, the Edessa church produced some important personages in church history. One of these was Tatian (ca. 110-172). He was a very learned man, having gone to Rome first to study rhetoric and then Christianity as a student of Justin and Eusebius. He later returned to Edessa to give his utmost support to the work of the local church. He wrote a number of works including the famous "Life of Christ" in Syriac, which is in effect, really a commentary on St. Mark's Gospel. The Edessa church used this as one of their main texts. Tatian also wrote an attack on Greek culture, as a heretic, he is still important in church history. Another is Bardaisan, one of those writing hymns in Syriac.

Thus, with its own church building, its own vernacular Bible and its own hymnologists, Edessa is a typical example of an early local church. Because of changes in the government and culture of Mesopotamia, this church ceased to exist even though it had lasted with its own special identity through the second and third centuries and was still there at the time of the Council of Nicaea.

2. Examples of the preservation of local identity, mutual respect and equal interchange.

i) The Roman and Corinthian Churches

A reliable historical document shows that Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthian church around 95 AD. This is an important document in the literature of the early church and for the first two centuries, "Clement's Letter to the Corinthians" formed part of the New Testament documents. But once the New Testament had been formally drawn up these letters were left out, though they remain important historical documents.

These letters principally shed light on the contradictions which emerged in the Corinthian church over the deposition of an elder (equivalent to a bishop). Clement wrote as a representative of the Roman church, urging them to support their bishop.

Thus, this letter tells us about the relations among local churches during this time and the respective conditions of each. The example illustrates the special characteristics of the churches involved, the Corinthian and the Roman.

The New Testament churches founded by Paul and the seven churches recorded in Revelation were all local churches. Moreover, they all retained their independence and initiative; their only links being the visits of disciples and the exchange of letters. This situation persisted for the first five centuries until the end of the Council of Nicaea.

At that time the Roman church represented the world of Latin civilization while the Corinthian represented the Greek. Theologically, the eastern church laid particular stress on abstract philosophy such as the doctrine of the Trinity and the dual nature of Christ. The western church, represented by St. Augustine, emphasized more concrete problems such as salvation. As far as church organization was concerned, Romans paid particular attention to church structure while the eastern church had few structures in this respect, a reflection of the differences between eastern and western cultures.

Clement's letter advised the Corinthians to support their bishop as leader. He expounded his point of view in many ways, using the order of the universe and the Roman army as examples to try to persuade them that they must observe order, that there ought to be both law and organization. But the Corinthian church was so much less concerned with such considerations that difficulties arose over the matter. This was possibly because of the legacy of democracy, at least in comparison with Rome, that Corinth had from the ancient Greek states.

The Romans emphasized the law; the east, philosophy. Differences in eastern and western culture expressed themselves in the special characters of the local churches. Historical fact and objective contemporary conditions both illustrate how the local churches represented different economies, cultures, societies, governments and histories. Thus, it is again possible to see from this that, even though each local church had its own characteristics, and that the left-hemisphere and right-hemisphere culture were both manifested in the churches, still relations between these local churches were based on equality of status. During the post-apostolic period in the second century, Rome was by no means in a superior position. Clement did not write to the Corinthians in his own or in the pope's name, but in the name of all brothers of the Roman church. It is this kind of equal treatment which reflected the reasonable balance between the universal and the local church.

ii) The Roman and Smyrnian Churches

The Smyrnian church was that of Asia Minor and it had even more of an eastern style than the Corinthian church. In order to understand the relations between the two churches I have taken the observation of Easter as an example. Bishop Polycarp of Smyrnia went to visit the Roman bishop Anicetus circa 154-155. They were on brotherly terms with each other and in faith and church experience they were of one heart and mind. But when it came to the proper date for keeping Easter they were divided. The Smyrnian church kept to the eastern custom of placing the festival on the 14th day of nissan, that is, the Jewish Passover. But the Roman church insisted that Easter fall on a Sunday, the first day of seven in a week. The 14th day of the month of nissan might not be a Sunday and thus there was a huge difference between the two. It was not until the Council of Nicaea that this matter was resolved. These two bishops never could see eye to eye on this problem, but they continued to maintain good relations. This is our earliest example and a model instance of mutual respect. They had agreed to differ in matters of practice and order.

Although by the third and fourth centuries and following the Council of Nicaea, the contradictions had intensified, the situation in the mid-second century was still favorable. At

that time each retained different characteristics, but they each had mutual respect for the other. This preserved universality while respecting local identity. Universality found expression in the local nature of the Roman and Smyrnian churches. This was also the reasonable balance between unity and selfhood.

iii) A case of the maintenance of local character and selfhood in spite of restrictions on matters of faith and theology: The Coptic Church.

The Coptic church was actually the church of Egypt, centered in Alexandria. The school of theology there, of which Origen is an outstanding representative, is famous in church history. Even earlier, there was Clement of Alexandria and the main leader of the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius, who also belonged to the Alexandrian school. This school of thought always held a leading position in theology. Distinct from the Antioch school, it later also differentiated itself from that of Constantinople.

The Chalcedon Council in 451 AD resolved the problem of monophysitism. The abbot of the monastery at Constantinople, Eutyches, advocated that between the two natures of Christ, his divinity was dominant, his humanity being subsumed into it. This view met with opposition, but Dioscorus, the bishop of Alexandria, held firmly to it. In the end, the Chalcedon Council ruled that monophysitism was heresy. The Bishop of Alexandria died in prison. In the resolution of the Council of Chalcedon, the Constantinople school prevailed over that of Alexandria. Politically, this meant the subjugation of Egyptian civilization to Roman imperialism; while in terms of the faith of the church, the Constantinian school was victorious over that of Alexandria. The Alexandrian school resisted the Council's decision and divorced themselves from the church of that time, establishing themselves as the Coptic church independent of Constantinople, the representative of the universal church.

The Coptic church insisted on using their own Copt language in liturgy and writings. This is a very clear manifestation of nationalism.

From 451 up until the middle of the 6th century, in 567 AD, there were two rival factions in the Egyptian church. In 567 the Copts, who adhered to monophysitism, were in the dominant position, forcing the Egyptian church, with its Coptic background, to shake off the fetters of Constantinople and its doctrinal supremacy, and establish its independence. By the seventh century, both the Turks and Islam had invaded. The Coptic church found itself encircled and so severely persecuted that it was almost destroyed. But the church in Egypt has managed to preserve its own basic religious beliefs even to the present day. Although its numbers are small, its influence is great and it has preserved the Alexandrian traditions. For example, communion is offered only in the form of the bread without the wine. They also have their own forms for baptism and the mass.

II. The Reformation: A movement to break with Papal control, liberate local characteristics and selfhood.

The reformation of the 16th century had its own social and political context, such as the disintegration of feudalism, the growth of cities and the formation of democratic states, not

to mention the beginnings of capitalism and the rise of humanism. Engels saw it as the opposition of the European bourgeoisie to feudalism, the first engagement of his "three decisive battles." This is absolutely correct. However, looking at the inner pattern of the development of Christianity itself, one sees independent reasons and motivations. When the local nature of the church was subjected to 'universality' - the universal rule of the Pope, that is, suppression and strangulation - there were inevitably a large number of people who arose to demand liberation and the fulfillment of their own innermost beliefs, and the peace to pursue them. They demanded that the life of the church conform to Biblical principles, such as "justification through faith," "the authority of the Bible for the church and its disciples," "taking the apostolic church as eternal role model." Such concepts, without exception, may be said to have become the common faith and motivation of every reformer, sect and group, leading even unto martyrdom. From such faith came the denial of the authority of Pope and clergy to remit sin and of the church hierarchy with its special privileges. All believers were considered equal, as brothers and sisters. The church was seen as a gathering of believers coming together in the areas where they lived. Worship and witness to the Lord were to be carried out in conformity with the teachings of the Bible and the model of the apostolic church. Thus it was that the Reformation broke out, a movement no power could stop, an eternal historical record. It broke up the papal monopoly of the 'universal' church while establishing a church in various areas of each country that developed its own regional and individual patterns. There follow a few historical examples, hardly a complete list, to illustrate this point:

1. The German Reformation

In the forward to "An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation," Martin Luther spent a good portion of time in censuring the Pope, saying he was no representative of Christ nor successor to the Apostles, exposing papal extravagance and dissipation to show there was no secular ruler on earth more wicked. Furthermore, with great indignation, he wrote: "We have always been perfectly justified in hanging thieves, in executing robbers, so what kind of reasoning allows the Pope to go free?" The rest of the text is divided into 27 sections. The principal message of the second is that no foreigner from Rome should enjoy profits in Germany. The third section advocates that if the churches in various parts of Germany needed bishops or priests they should receive them from neighboring churches, and most certainly did not need the interference of the Roman pope. Apart from these there were also sections pointing out that matters of the church and clergy were not to be under papal direction, even going so far as to say they should come under jurisdiction of the local government.

The Peasant Revolt, which broke out under Luther's influence and encouragement, produced the famous Twelve Articles. These Articles also clearly reflected the pressing demands for selfhood in the German church. The First Article brings up the right of German peasants to choose and recall their own pastors, without benefit of papal appointments. The Second Article says that the grain tithe, in accordance with the Bible, was given to provide for the pastor and answer the needs of the poor; it was not for the papal budget. As for the livestock tithe, this was purely a papal invention and not a Biblical law, and so should be abolished. The Third Article says that on the grounds of a Christian's freedom (as expounded

in Martin Luther's work), serfdom should be abolished. The Twelfth says that from then on, the establishment or repeal of any right or duty, must be based on the Bible.

2. The Swiss Reformation

a) Amongst the 67 theses debated by Zwingli at Zurich in October 1523, there is this striking argument: the church is a body of disciples, a local organization which meets on the basis of common aspirations and is directly linked to its head, Jesus Christ. He did not bestow on the clergy, including the pope, any special status.

b) The 18th point of the *Articuli de Regimine Ecclesiae* (Geneva Articles), of which Calvin was the principal author, discusses the church in this way:

Although I believe there is only one Christian church, we also have always recognized that the grouping of Christians together has to be according to locality, that it is this coming together in each area which is known as the church... If the Gospel has not reached an area, if no one has heard or accepted its word there, under such circumstances, we cannot say that there is a church. So it is with the church under the command of the Pope. It is not Christ's church; it is in fact a temple to the anti-Christ.

Then in 1559, Calvin helped to draw up the Forty Articles of the Gallican Confession. Articles 25-40 deal with the nature of the church, its organization and liturgy; and make this remarkable argument:

Unless the Lord's word has been heard, obedience to the Lord's word been sworn and the Holy Rites held faithfully, there is no church. For this reason I condemn the papal assemblies for abandoning the pure Word of God, for corrupting the church service, for falsifying and destroying it so that the church has become full of superstition and idolatry.

We believe every true pastor, whoever he may be, is in the hands of the only head, commander and true bishop, Jesus Christ. All have the same authority and equal rights. Because of this, there ought to be no church which claims the right to be more exalted than any other church.

3. The English Reformation

The English Reformation, which principally occurred from the reign of Henry VIII to that of Elizabeth I, arose primarily out of the struggle between papal and royal supremacy. In the end a state religion was established with all papal influence removed. This, as a matter of course, produced very favorable conditions for the development of a local English church with its own selfhood. Consequently, Cranmer based the drawing up and publication of the Bishop's Manual and the Thirteen Articles on the Augsburg Confession. The Forty-Two Articles published in 1553, during Edward VI's reign, which John Knox helped to formulate, were strongly colored by Calvinism. These then became the basis for the Thirty-nine Articles during Elizabeth I's reign. Thus, England's state religion, both in terms of the articles of

belief and the organization of the church and its liturgy, had separated itself to a great extent from the influence of Rome and had taken on its own English character.

4. The Dutch and Scottish Reformations

The Dutch Reformation, led by the Prince of Orange, and the Scottish Reformation, led by John Knox, were similar in that church reforms were closely linked to the people's move for independence. The Prince of Orange was the national hero who led the Netherlands to resist Spanish invasion and control. He was also the leader of the religious reformation who led the Dutch church to break with Rome. In the same way, it was the patriotic soldier and leader, Knox, who organized the Scots to stand up to France. He was also an outstanding reformer who set up a model Calvinist church in Scotland. Naturally both the Netherlands and Scotland gave birth to local churches with their own national characteristics.

5. Radical Reformation Sects

The Anabaptists, who felt that neither Luther in the German Reformation nor Zwingli in the Swiss, had gone far enough, along with the Puritans, who felt the English church retained too many Papist traits, were both extreme reformist sects and could be termed radicals. Although they had weaknesses of one kind or another, we can commend their emphasis on reform, not only reform of their individual souls or reform of corruption in the church, but also the desire to reform the society they found themselves in - the desire to establish heaven on earth. This characteristic was expressed in the short-lived Munster commune, and in the independence of the North American colonies. This would be a very interesting area for specialist research, and I only mention it in passing here. This special characteristic was another form of local and individual expression. That is, they were to be closely bound up with and deeply involved in society, economy, government, culture and so on in the surrounding area, in order to make the church stand with the people of that time and place, sharing weal and woe with them.

III. The modern indigenous church movement in the third world has broken the hold of the mission boards, liberated and developed the struggle for the local nature and selfhood of the church.

1. A developmental survey

Already in the 1930's, areas such as China, South-East Asia, Japan, India and Africa, had proposed and even made contributions towards, indigenous churches. This developed much farther after the Second World War. There is a lot of material on this subject which it would be impossible to list out point by point. In the last volume of his church history Kenneth S. Latourette listed many examples from different areas such as the East Indian archipelago, the Philippines, India, Ceylon, and Africa including north African Algeria and so on. The movement for a local church had already begun to develop around the 1930's in India, Japan and Korea. Moreover, it had produced the leadership and organization for independent churches.

In China itself there were progressives such as Yu Guozhen and Cheng Jingyi who had proposed the establishment of an independent Chinese church with its own distinct stamp and direction. It was only because of contemporary circumstances that the idea was not realized. Latourette compared the conditions of churches run by the mission boards between 1914 and 1944 (that is, around the time of the two world wars), and saw that the church in 1944 was better equipped to take root among the people. He wrote:

In 1914 among most non-Occidental tribes and nations (today's third world) it (the church) was being kept alive and growing by continual transfusions of blood from the founding churches of the West. The transfusions were in the form of missionaries who headed the ecclesiastical organizations and the educational and philanthropic institutions which were expressions and channels of the faith. They were also through the financial subsidies by which these institutions were maintained. By 1945 the leadership, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, was rapidly ceasing to be foreign and was becoming indigenous, recruited from the sons and daughters of the soil. That leadership was both young and able. The missionary era was passing.

This church historian had already seen that in 1945 the days of the missionary movement were over. (see Latourette: *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 7, pp. 410-411.)

2. Theory and Viewpoints

What were the theories and viewpoints which guided this part of history? What thinking drove the local leaders to act the way they did? I would like to offer a few quotations.

i) The continuation of current missionary work is a barrier to the realization of the selfhood of a church... The time has come for missionaries to withdraw from many third world areas. (Pastor John Getu, leader of the East African Church, speaking at the Mission Festival at Milwaukee in 1971.)

These were the words of an East African church leader representing Africa at a conference in America. In his speech, he "moratorium." This word comes from the time when the victorious allies demanded that Germany pay indemnity after the Second World War. Since Germany could not pay, an agreement was concluded. This word, therefore, was originally used to indicate cancellation of a legally established and frequently implemented system or stipulation, the cancellation of an already established or routine obligation. In this case, "moratorium" was nothing other than a perfectly natural movement to make the missionaries return home.

ii) We must undertake the mission to renew Africa, not to follow the path of 'commerce and Christianity'. Instead we must undertake a completely new duty to thoroughly regenerate the form and content of our belief, to make it consonant with our unremitting, honorable, just and peaceful fight for our own pure and integrated culture, and for the development of human dignity. We must drop the anchor of a true spirituality. The demand for missionaries to depart is, in essence, a strengthening of the universality of the church through locality.

(from the speech of the Secretary-General, Burgess Carr, at the Third Plenary Session of the Pan-African Council of Christian Churches, Lusaka, 1974.)

This Secretary-General of the All-African Council of Christian Churches had some very profound points to make which were in the same spirit as "The Church and the Restoration of African Culture," mentioned previously. A popular African saying goes, "In the past we had the land and they the Bible; now we have the Bible, they the land." So "the demand for missionaries to leave" mentioned here was essentially a strengthening of the universality of the church through its locality.

iii) Moreover, the Church Growth Movement has practically demolished the traditional mission station approach. By announcing its death and propagating a more indigenous, people-oriented, and biblical missionary pattern, church growth theory has contributed to the indigenous church movement. By insisting on the training of lay personnel, by stressing group evangelization, and by emphasizing witnessing as part of the believer's way of life and not as the province of a professional evangelist or pastor, by defining evangelism in the perspective of the multiplication of local churches that will worship, teach and exercise discipline in the light of their own particular circumstances, the Church Growth Movement has made a strong, if indirect, contribution to the formation of autochthonous churches with a message and lifestyle relevant to their economic, cultural, social and political realities. (Orlando E. Costas: *The Church and its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World*, p. 127)

Let me also bring up another view here, that of "the doctrine of the church development movement." This paragraph forms the central thinking of that theory, and in particular the last sentence of the paragraph which stresses that all local churches must take the characteristics of their surrounding area as their foundation. This clearly embodies localism, indigenization and selfhood.

CONCLUSION

These various aspects, just described, of church history, show that the Chinese church must follow the path of three-self. What we should point out finally, is that conditions in China today have provided the Three-Self Movement of the Chinese church with excellent conditions, bringing the church into a leading position in enabling it to realize the selfhood of the church and enrich the life of the universal church.

What is meant here by conditions within China, include its age-old civilization, the hard-working, wise and valiant character of her people, its philosophy and art, as well as the socialist system. The movement for an indigenous church in the South Indian archipelago and in South-East Asia is taking off, but there is still one problem which they have not managed to solve as well as we. This is that although they are independent of government control, economically they are still tied, while we are independent politically and economically. This is part of the Chinese situation.

There is yet one more point to make. China's religious policy, especially after the Cultural Revolution, has been implemented more and more thoroughly. All these are part of our advantageous conditions. Add to this our country's forward- looking stance and the establishment of the 'two cultures' (a socialist civilization marked by spiritual as well as material values), and China will become more and more suitable for the growth of Christianity.

Therefore, it is clear that conditions in China today are highly favorable for the realization of three-self, allowing the church to take a leading position in this respect.

Nanjing Theological Review, June, 1985, p. 11.

translated by Katie Tute

3. Self-Propagation in the Light of the History of Christian Thought – Chen Zemin

In the following essay I want to discuss the theological question of three-self in the Chinese church today in light of the history of Christian thought, with an emphasis upon self-propagation.

To begin with, I would like to point out that three-self is not something we have created or invented, not some new idea or plan we have come up with. The three-self principle has its basis in the Bible and is a principle that has been adhered to by all churches throughout the 2000 year history of Christianity. One can say that nearly every religious organization has had a 'three-self' principle to a greater or lesser extent; otherwise they would not have lasted long. The term 'three-self' is not to be found in the Bible, but we know that the term 'trinity' is not to be found there either. The doctrine of the trinity, however, permeates the Bible. In the same way, this principle and spirit of three-self has a Biblical basis and theology as its theoretical grounds. We can see from church history or the history of Christian thought that three-self is a necessary principle.

The diametrical opposite of 'three-self' is 'three-other'; that is, others support, others administer, others propagate. We speak of self-support, not 'standing on one's own feet,' because in Chinese this term has connotations of laying a foundation, of originating something, whereas the foundation of our church is Christ and not ourselves. We could not originate it, but we have a duty to support, establish and develop it. If any church wishes to exist for a long period of time, and wants, moreover, to develop, it cannot depend on other people for its financial support. We know that examples of this kind of situation can be found in the Bible as well. The churches of the New Testament all relied in principle on contributions from members. Naturally, they did not refuse assistance from other churches in times of difficulty. However, we do not find any New Testament churches which relied entirely on support from other churches.

Self-administration means managing one's own church. In the New Testament, no local church saw its founder as the church's overlord, no matter who it was. When Paul founded a church, he also set up a supervisor (called a Bishop later in church history). When the church's foundation was solid, he went to another place.

From then on, the supervisors, elders and administrators of that church ran the church. This is very natural. Paul never issued orders; he always exhorted others as equals. His role was that of an apostle of Christ, not that of a superior. So we can say that the churches of the New Testament were all self-administered.

Later the Catholic Church developed the papal system which in principle was a system of self-administration. The Catholic system uses the bishop as the head of a diocese or church. Theologically, the pope and other bishops were equals, but he was the head or convener of equals. Later, the power of the pope grew, taking on a high degree of centralism or autocracy. But the bishop of each place still retained a certain independence, the pope was but the chief among many bishops, with the status or rights of a chief. The independence and

initiative of the local churches was only limited and weakened by the papal system after a certain point in history, but historically the state of affairs in which the bishop is head has never been lacking or suspended. Today we find the trend toward autonomy throughout the Catholic Church to a greater or lesser extent and this trend is strengthening.

Before the religious reformation in 16th century Europe, there was already a trend toward autonomy on the part of the local churches. The clearest example of this is the Ultramontanist-Gallican controversy. Ultramontanism was a native Italian party, oriented "beyond the mountains," that is, beyond the Alps, toward the pope. Throughout history, most popes have been chosen from among the Italians. The party opposing them was called the Gallican party - Gallia being an ancient name for France. This party promoted independent powers for the French Catholic Church, that it should not be completely under the control of Rome. This was an expression of a local church seeking a definite initiative of its own and is not rare in church history. Another example would be the Hussite movement and Hussite wars prior to the Reformation. The local Czech church had a strong sense of national identity and demanded national independence and autonomy. Again, the main reason Henry the Eighth broke with Rome during the English Reformation of the 16th century was a fight for power of self rule. Of course the case was very complex, involving questions of marriage and rites, but the basic issue was England's unwillingness to be long under the jurisdiction of the pope. In the reformations in Germany, France, Holland and so on on the European mainland, matters of theological thinking, liturgy and church order are all colored by nationalism. One of the three great principles of the religious reformation was the priesthood of all believers, that is to say that every believer has direct access to God and does not need the Catholic Church to act as intermediary. It follows then that the church established by the believers in each place should have the power of self-management. Therefore, as new churches developed following the reformation, many denominations were produced whose special feature was that they had thrown off the domination of the Roman Catholic Church. During the rise of nationalism in Europe from the 15th to the 16th century the principles of church order were closely linked to autonomy.

Since the schism between the western and eastern churches in the 11th century, the orthodox church has consistently emphasized the principle of autonomy. Today the 17 orthodox churches are all termed autocephalous (meaning that each church has its own head, that it controls itself), each church is in principle independent. Although the influence of churches like the Russian Orthodox Church or the Greek Orthodox Church is very great, they have no jurisdiction over the others. The Orthodox Church of Constantinople was once the head, but this was an honorary thing with no binding powers. These churches are basically distinguished in terms of national, state and geographic boundaries, so the principle of autonomy has continued to this day.

This question of autonomy touches upon that of ecclesiology, including issues such as the nature of the church, holy orders, organization, etc. There are generally three types of church order: the system of bishops, the system of elders and the congregational system. It is felt that a basis for all three types can be found in the Bible and that there is a theological basis as well. These forms have historical, social and cultural sources, and all are expressions of a certain level of the autonomy principle, but there are differences in the scope of autonomy

and in the system of administration. Some are larger, some smaller. In the bishop system, the diocese is the administrative unit. For the presbytery system it is the presbytery, the session and finally the synod, in order of increasing size. The synod may cover several provinces or even a country. The congregational system in principle has a single congregation as an autonomous unit. All these systems follow the autonomy principle. Should the Chinese church today adopt one of these as a model of church order or create a new one? This is not a question to be hastily resolved, but should be decided on the basis of our historical conditions, the actual situation in our society and our cultural traditions. We must try to find a new road, one which has a theological foundation. In the past China was a mission field for foreign mission boards; all the different denominations came to proselytize in China. But the period of development for these denominations and organizations was relatively brief, their roots shallow, so we cannot choose one to be the model for our church structure without careful consideration. We ought to establish a church order appropriate to the actual conditions in our country and this requires consideration of many factors. For example, some western countries have experienced a relatively long historical period of capitalism so that their churches exist in a more or less bourgeois democratic ideological milieu. A feudal way of thinking is deeply ingrained in the Chinese people, however, to the point where it has produced the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore when we want to establish our system of church order, we cannot but take these factors into consideration. We must not be anxious to realize our goals, doing things carelessly as a result. What is even more important at present is that we safeguard unity and maintain mutual respect. We should manage our church ourselves. As for the method employed, we can explore this slowly.

Self-propagation does not mean propagating oneself, but undertaking the propagation of the gospel by oneself. Christianity has been a proselytizing religion from the beginning. Matthew 28:19 states: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This verse of scripture has been called "The Great Commission." According to this great task given by Jesus, we all bear a special trust to spread the gospel everywhere under heaven. One who propagates the gospel is called a missionary. The apostle Paul was such a one and the Book of Acts is a record of his missionary journeys. We believe that the original Christianity was a missional religion, a religion with a mission to spread the gospel, but not a missionary religion. This means that it is a religion which does not rely solely on missionaries to evangelize. This distinction is seldom found in most writings. Our theology should be a missional theology, not a missionary one. This is due to the particular significance the term missionary has taken on; we do not want to use it. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christianity spread throughout the entire world, becoming a global religion. Naturally, this cannot be separated from the missionary movement. But should not the present task of continuing to spread the gospel in each country belong to the people of that country? Or should it be done by missionaries? Our views on this issue differ from those of certain people in Hong Kong and overseas. We believe that since it has been more than one hundred years since Christianity was brought to China, Chinese Christianity has already established itself and grown to maturity. From now on the mission enterprise in China should be borne to completion by Chinese Christians ourselves. Foreign missionaries should not supplant us.

Missionaries were active before the 16th century, but there was no missionary movement. In the apostolic age, Paul, Barnabas and others spread the gospel to every place. This was their mission activity but there was no missionary movement, no large-scale, organized, mass-type movement. In his 'A History of the Expansion of Christianity,' American church historian Latourette speaks of the historical process by which Christianity spread from Jerusalem outward to the rest of the world. He writes of the mission activities of the first person to go out to propagate the gospel and of how the missionary movement was later born.

In the period at the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th, new geographical discoveries broadened the scope of this propagation. The feudal system in Europe was in ruins, giving rise to nascent capitalism and everyone was seeking markets, particularly some seafaring nations such as Spain, Portugal, Holland and England. One after another they expanded toward North America, Africa and Asia. This expansion marked the development of primitive capitalism, or the beginnings of colonialism. The missionary movement began at this time as well. Missionaries followed the businessmen and imperialist armies out. Some were the vanguard of the aggressors, some their backup force. Some were military advisors. Of course, some were genuinely engaged in propagating the gospel and we do not wish to negate this. But respecters of historical fact all recognize that the missionary movement was linked to colonial expansion. It was inseparable in terms of military ventures, commercial enterprise or culture.

The English writer C.S. Lewis has said that in propagating the gospel one should not be influenced by nor allow interference from anything that is not part of the essence of Christianity. The missionary movement really did spread the seed of the gospel everywhere, but at the same time, the missionaries brought their own cultural traditions, ideologies and lifestyles to the people of the mission field, making it very difficult for them to distinguish what in all this was truly the gospel. As people accepted the gospel, so at the same time, they accepted non-Christian 'weeds.' This situation is very similar to the weeds spoken of in the parable in Matthew 13. Of course, we do not want to fit every detail into the allegory, but the spirit of the parable is anchored in reality. The missionary movement could not avoid carrying with it some negative things. In the course of the twentieth century there has grown a definite perception of this fact in the hearts of the people of the mission fields (that is, in the third world), so they have put forward ideas of 'self administration,' 'self-support,' and 'self-propagation.' If we continually rely on foreign missionaries to spread the gospel for us, the 'weeds' will increase. But of course in saying this, I do not mean to imply that all missionaries are bad people.

In the past China was a huge mission field, with great amounts of personnel and materiel invested by mission boards of every country. China was also the first country in which criticisms were leveled and resistance raised to the missionary movement. After the Opium War, Christianity was used as an instrument of aggression. The Chinese people were extremely sensitive to this and thus were produced many 'missionary cases' as well as the great Boxer Rebellion and the anti-imperialist and 'anti-Christian' movements in the period from 1916 to 1921. These circumstances were not to be found in other countries. During the twenties and thirties, the Chinese church put forward concepts of 'two-self' or 'four-self' in opposition to 'three-other.' At the time, the more enlightened missionaries endorsed these concepts but this independence movement of the Chinese church did not succeed because the

`wheat' was choked off by the `weeds.' The `fruit' was not properly set. All in all, the independence movement of the Chinese church achieved little prior to liberation. Following liberation, we went through a `three-self reform movement,' and came to a clearer and clearer understanding that three-self was the road we should follow.

Today, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Chinese Protestant church has aroused great response around the world. In Europe at first, some colonial mission organizations opposed Three Self. But they gradually came to feel that there was a definite truth behind the three-self principle. For them, too, this was an opportunity for self-reflection, and they have now produced a number of books critiquing the missionary movements of the past. In the third world, in those churches called the `backward churches' (the churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America) there is opposition to linking the missionary movement to colonial aggression as a tool of aggression and control in the third world. So we are not alone when we speak of three-self. Many churches have a 'three-self' movement, but they do not necessarily use our terminology.

At the 1980 meeting of the National China Christian Council in Nanjing, Principal Ting, in his "Retrospect and Prospect" address, said that since we had implemented self-administration, self-support and self-propagation to a certain extent, our task from now on should be to take stock of our experience, and, on the foundation of past achievements, go a step further in completing our mission to be "well-supported, well-run, and well-propagated." In the remainder of my essay, I would like to focus on the question of self-propagation.

Self-propagation should include the two aspects of what is propagated and how propagation is carried on. I have said above that self-propagation is not the propagation of self, but the propagation of the gospel by oneself. That being the case, what gospel are we propagating? What is the content of evangelism? And how is it carried on? Seen from the vantage point of the history of Christian thought, this has been an issue from the very beginning of Christian propagation of the gospel. How will it be possible, in propagating the gospel in the soil of a new culture, to enable local people to understand and accept it? What should the evangelist do when the gospel conflicts with local culture? Is the answer complete rejection of the local culture, ideology and customs? Or compromise? The Catholic missionary Francis Xavier was the first to carry the gospel to Japan. He failed primarily because he did not understand oriental religion and culture. Matteo Ricci, who brought Catholicism to China during the same period, was more successful because his guiding principle was respect for and integration with Chinese culture. Later, during the K'ang Hsi period, Ricci was accused of surrendering to Chinese culture by the Franciscans, who insisted upon maintaining the whole spectrum of western Christianity in contradiction to traditional Chinese culture to the point where the K'ang Hsi emperor, in a fit of anger, threw them all out. Catholicism was thus nearly extinguished in China. This illustrates the fact that in bringing the gospel to a place, one cannot regard the indigenous culture as a complete enemy, as evil. This is a lesson of history.

When Christianity was spread throughout the Greek and Roman world in the first and second centuries, the issue of what was to be propagated and how had to be faced. The apostle Paul borrowed the language of Greek philosophy to spread the gospel and not only

Paul, but the local bishops, were engaged in evangelism. When dealing with the question of how to enable people to accept Christianity they inevitably had to reflect the special characteristics and traditions of their own cultures in the context of self-propagation. Christian faith is a spiritual matter, inseparable from human thought and feeling. Each place has its own cultural traditions, which, along with the people's philosophy and original religion, possess its own national characteristics. Latin Christianity, for example, was colored by Latin civilization, while in the eastern churches, the Alexandrian and Antiochan schools reflected the national character of late Greek culture, that is Hellenistic civilization. Looking at the entire course of church history, each period reflected the dominant philosophy of the times. The philosophy of Augustine, for example, reflected the Platonism of the day, as well as the features of a period in which the slave system was crumbling in Europe, but feudalism was not yet established. Later when feudalism had reached its apogee, Europe entered the Middle Ages. At that time Aristotelianism was popular in Europe and all this was reflected in the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas. The eastern church, heir to Hellenistic civilization and eastern theological thinking, emphasized neo-platonism and mysticism. From the tenth century on, they blended into Slavic culture. The churches of the eastern orthodox tradition reflect these influences today.

Following the religious reformation of the 16th century, Christianity was integrated into the local cultural traditions, national characteristics and social conditions as it was being spread in western Europe. A detailed study shows that Germany, England, France, Italy, etc. all have different emphases in their propagation of the gospel. Of course Europe is a region both united and divided and it is very difficult to distinguish each country's special characteristics clearly. In a general way, however, they all possess European qualities. Many denominations and theologies appeared, due to the fact that each place has its own traditions, politics, economics and every kind of social factor, but all are still Christian. Throughout its development from the first century until its present status as a world religion, Christianity has not been one religion, but has had three major branches - eastern orthodox, Catholicism and many Protestant denominations. All have their own particular emphases, their own characteristics and colorations. This has made Christianity all the richer, the more in accord with the needs of the people in each place, the easier for people of all nations to accept. It would be inconceivable were Christianity to have been from the beginning a kind of unchanging, set model. From a theological point of view, the revelation of God in history has been apprehended and responded to in different ways by different peoples. This has enriched Christianity the more and illustrates its universality (catholicity). Churches in English speaking countries call this 'unity in variety', both one and diversified. It is an historical necessity.

How then can the Chinese church today propagate well? Have any special theological features or experiences emerged out of the tortuous course of the past 39 years? We always meet with this question, whether visiting abroad or receiving foreign visitors at home, and we feel that it is a very important one. At times we do not know where to begin in discussing it. Although in contacts with foreign friends we always take it up to some extent, we do not discuss it very systematically because of time constraints. We really need to spend time taking stock and setting in order; we should become systematic in our treatment of this question. But the whole issue may still be quite vague in our minds. There have been and still

are quite a few Christians in our church whose concern focuses on the two questions belief/unbelief and spirituality/unspirituality. They divide all humanity into two parts: one Christian, the other non-Christian. They further divide the Christians into two groups: one spiritual, the other not. Is not this too simplistic and self-centered? How then shall we deal with these questions? We do not consider belief to be a matter of belief in certain doctrines. The matter is not only one of belief in doctrines but of faith or commitment - a commitment of one's whole life to God, to Christ. This is a theological explanation, for when we speak of belief vs. unbelief, we must broaden our thinking a bit. We must not be restricted by a literal understanding of doctrine. What is spirituality? What is unspirituality? 'Ling' and 'jingshen' in Chinese both mean spiritual. The term 'shuling' indicates the value of a person's spiritual life, with spirituality being expressed in every aspect of one's life. Human life has a rich spiritual side as well as a material one. Christianity seeks to resolve many problems of this spiritual side and this naturally involves the whole of human life. Thus, the scope of spirituality is broad and we should not limit it to certain narrow and subjective emotions, or to a certain type of religious quest. Questions of belief/unbelief and spirituality/unspirituality are questions which our Chinese theological circles must resolve. If we were to confine all Christian gospel and doctrine to these two questions, however, and use our understanding of them as a standard by which to judge others, we would be too narrow and our Christian theology too simple, which would be extremely detrimental to our desire to 'systematize.'

In the past, some people used these two sets of opposites as the boundary line between the fundamentalist or evangelical school and the modernist school or liberal theology, causing many ruptures and pointless disputes. In taking stock now of our thirty plus years of experience, it can be said that if contemporary Chinese theology has a special characteristic, it is to have overcome denominationalism, by which we mean endless divisive controversies and mutual attacks. In the Chinese term for denomination (zongpai) the first character (zong) refers to a source handed down which at a certain point is shaped into a group of adherents, as if we were to say Luther 'zong,' Calvin 'zong,' Anglican 'zong,' Wesley 'zong' and so on. The second character (pai) encompasses the ego-centric exclusivity of the small group or faction. To overcome denominationalism, we must overcome both 'zong' and 'pai.' We have taken some mainstream denominations of the past as well as some very exclusivist denominations of the past such as the Little Flock, the True Jesus Church, the Real True Jesus Church, etc. and step by step, united them. Our theological thinking should transcend denominationalism, promote church unity, mutual respect, mutual learning and mutual enrichment. Only in this way can we speak of systematizing our theological thinking. The system must be very broad and rich in content, including both the Biblical truth of "in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets ... (and) has spoken to us by a Son" (that is, Jesus Christ) and the exposition of Biblical truth by philosophers and theologians of church history. These are the treasures of the rich tradition we inherit. We must also include here the comprehension, understanding and experience of Biblical truth in our own spiritual lives. It should possess both breadth and depth as well as encompass our own national characteristics, which are extremely rich and varied. It should by no means be restricted to a narrow perspective or be allowed to ossify. To put it simply, it must be rooted in both Christ and China, a union of Christian and Chinese. Only in this way can it help us Chinese Christians as we witness to the gospel among the broad masses of our people. And only then can it contribute to the catholicity of the ecumenical Christian church.

At the same time, our theology should include a method of approach to non-Christian cultures, moralities, etc. What value have they as far as we are concerned? How shall we approach the realities of life in society? We should practice mutual respect both within the church and, outside it, toward other religions. Last semester we held a class here at the seminary entitled 'Introduction to World Religions,' which gave everyone the opportunity to understand something of other faiths. We did not treat them as entirely heresy or superstition. We are willing to listen to and understand whatever they have that we regard as of value. This can be called 'dialogue,' although it is an incomplete one.

Everyone has studied 'Systematic Theology,' which includes our concept of God, Christology, concept of humanity, salvation theory, eschatology, ecclesiology, etc. We make choices about what to absorb from the theological views of each denomination on the basis of our understanding. We also have our own viewpoint. Take for example our view of God. Is God the God of all humanity or only of Christianity? We say that God is the God of all humanity. When we apply religion in our lives do we think of the fact that God is also the God of the other and that God is the Lord of Creation? When we speak of the providence of God, we are not only referring to providence for Christians but for all humanity; this is a point we emphasize. We do not agree with duality or plurality of sources. We feel that all truth, goodness and beauty come from God, so at the seminary we frequently discuss how we should deal with the truth, goodness and beauty which exists outside the church. Actually the problems we meet with or discuss are not only Chinese problems. They have long been discussed overseas and many foreign friends have broken out of the circle of belief /unbelief.

Again, take Christology as an example. An American friend posed a question on his last visit, one he had often raised before: "How do you shape your Christology?" By which he meant, you already have a Christology, how did you arrive at it? Principal Ting has spoken in a number of essays of the Cosmic Christ, a concept based on the exposition of Christ's nature in the first chapter of Colossians and the second chapter of Philippians, Christ's role in creation and salvation and his future role in the final completion. All this concerns the entire cosmos. The Chinese term for cosmos (yuzhou) is composed of two characters also. The first, 'yu,' means above and below, the four directions. It is infinite. The second, 'zhou,' means for all time, so 'yuzhou' means all time and space, or Christ is always and everywhere present. Such a Christology is extremely broad.

Again, consider the understanding of humanity as an example. What is humanity in the eyes of God? Is it completely corrupt or does it have value? Is it worthy of salvation by God? We are also very concerned with this question. When we speak of the 'doctrine of salvation,' what, after all, do we mean by salvation? Some think that going up to heaven when one dies instead of down to hell is salvation. If we bring such a limited understanding to what it means to be saved, then our vision is too narrow. We believe that the significance of God's saving act is far broader than saving us from hell. Otherwise it would be enough to believe in God only as we near death. Whether or not we had believed during our lives, how we lived those lives, would be unimportant. But this is not how we see it.

Should our theology be this-worldly or not? Should it be concerned for and affirm the real world (while criticizing, transforming and judging) or shall we consider spiritual life to have no connection with the real world? At present, we are looking for ways to make the rituals, liturgy, music, art and literature of our church more Chinese, more indigenous in character. There is naturally a lot of resistance to this, mainly due to force of habit, by which I mean the kind of thinking characterized by the worship of things foreign found in the church in the past: the idea that only what was foreign was orthodox. As you all know, we have made some attempts at indigenization in the area of sacred music, but in some places, this too has met with resistance. There is a feeling that these are 'minor tunes,' not sacred songs, and some are unwilling to sing them. This requires reflection and reform on our part. We need to raise our standards, both in terms of quantity and quality. Our forms of worship, liturgy music, art, etc. can all be instruments of evangelism and we must all redouble our efforts in these areas, making them more consonant with the Chinese situation. Only then will they win approval from Christians and acceptance from non-Christians in China.

Chinese Protestants account for only 0.3-0.4% of the whole population. If we do not identify ourselves with the broad mass of the Chinese people, then we cannot bring the gospel to them. We, like everyone else, are patriotic. This is political identification. We, like everyone else, all accept the essence of the national culture. This is cultural identification. If we want to bring our most precious possessions to them, then it is from this basis of identification that we must work, before they will be willing to accept it. The gospel itself is a "stumbling block" for people. They have never been happy to listen to it. If we add to this some 'foreign matter,' then we make it even more difficult for people. We should find those areas where we speak a common language. These are things we should keep in mind when we consider our thirty years' experience of theological exploration, indigenous and contextual theology. We should also be familiar with trends in European, American and third world theology. We are more sympathetic to liberation theology from which we can draw concrete lessons. The Minjung theology of South Korea is also a branch of liberation theology worthy of our consideration.

Those of you who are to graduate, no matter what kind of church you are to work in, must take as your own task the establishment and development of Chinese theology. The churches of the whole world are watching you. What you do will be better than what we older generation have done. Rev. Y.T. Wu and the elder generation opened this way to us. If it were not the will of God, it could not have been done. According to the laws of history, one generation succeeds another and surpasses it. Thus, we cherish a tremendous hope for your generation.

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translated by Janice Wickeri

4. Changes in Theological Thinking in the Church in China – Wang Weifan

Having gone through our Lord's teaching, nurture and testing for more than thirty years, the Chinese church has now entered upon a journey which she can call her own. The new spiritual explorations of Chinese Christians and the ways in which they are reflected in certain theological changes are different from those of thirty years ago. These changes have no doubt been uneven for individual Christians have set foot at different depths and have traveled different distances. But it is not difficult to see that, just as the Israelites were led into Canaan by the pillars of cloud and pillars of fire in the wilderness, so the church in China has been led into a new spiritual realm.

The experience of the Shulammite maiden who follows her lover in The Song of Solomon may perhaps serve as a metaphor for the experience of many Chinese Christians who have followed Christ. The journey from "my beloved is mine" (2:16) to "I am my beloved's" (7:10) reflects the basic transformation in the relationship between the believer and Christ. It is a basic change as regards who is the center and who follows whom. Thirty odd years ago, Jesus was for many Christians little more than something to make up for human deficiency, a source of consolation in times of pain, someone to fill in the void or to compensate one after some loss. Christ was numbered among the things which one possessed, or he was a replacement for everything one had once possessed and had now lost. After thirty years of God's testing, thirty years of wrestling with God, many Christians are now like Jacob following his experience at Peniel (Gen. 32). They have little by little let go of that power which they thought they had to hold onto to prop themselves up. Now, Christ is no longer for them one possession among many. He is rather the Lord of lords and King of kings to whom they are subject. They are ready to follow Jesus to Gethsemane, no longer using "Father, give this to me..." or "Father, do this for me..." as the center of their prayers, but instead praying: "Not my will, but thy will be done." Although they continue to pray for their daily bread, they first pray, "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

For many Christians, the meaning of grace and blessing is no longer "getting" or "receiving." It is rather "giving" and "bestowing," all constrained by Jesus' love. Similarly, the richness of life is measured in terms of how much one gives for the Lord, not how much one can exact from him. When it comes to remembering the Lord at the Lord's Supper, Chinese Christians are like the disciple John who kept close to the loving bosom of his Lord who was about to empty out his love and his life before the world. The kenotic love of Christ is not simply that which quickens the movement of grace in one's heart so that one can love the Lord more deeply. More importantly, it allows the Christian to come to a deeper understanding of the love which enables one to give up his or her life for his friends, and thereby recall how, over thirty years ago, the compassionate heart was choked off from one's own people.

The wounds and scars which individuals acquired on life's way have led many Christians to seek Christ lying prostrate before the cross. Having "found joy in their own suffering" and comfort in the Christ "whose love will not abandon me," there were Christians who believed

that outside of Christ no spiritual love or personal solace could be found. Over the last thirty years, however, the true light of the cross has made it impossible for Christians to wallow in their own individual sufferings. The cross points the way to a more meaningful life, as expressed in the words from the familiar hymn, "That in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be." ("Oh Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go" by George Matheson, 1842-1906). This understanding has raised the spiritual awareness of Chinese Christians as it has opened up an even vaster road along which we may follow Jesus and learn from his example. As river waters will eventually dry up if they depart from their source so too will our love wither away if it does not dwell in the holy love of Christ. But the river of love must keep moving, for if its waters do not flow out into the sea, then they will stagnate and become lifeless.

In the first chapter of Second Peter, "brotherly affection" and "love" are separated by only a comma. In the Chinese Union Version of 2 Pet. 1:7, "love" is translated as "love for the people." But for many Chinese Christians, a dyke once stood between these two terms, and it was most difficult to go from one to the other. Thus, when the people mourned, Christians didn't beat their breasts in sorrow with them and when the people played the flute, we Christians didn't join in the dancing. Thirty years ago, Christians loved only a few people, may be a few dozen people, a small number of brothers and sisters who helped one another in times of difficulty, just as fish caught on dry land try simply to keep one another alive by wetting themselves with their own spittle. But this narrow approach to community has now been put aside, for Christians have immersed themselves in the ocean of the Chinese people. With a faith grounded in the selfless love of Christ, we have quietly entered into the life of society. And as the river waters overflow into the sea, Christians have found in their own land the shores of Galilee upon which to follow Christ and selflessly serve the people.

Like the Shulammite maiden in The Song of Solomon, the Lord has called Chinese Christians to a new life on two separate occasions: one call came when Christians were "in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff" (2:14a). And the other came after "a garden (was) locked, a fountain sealed" (4:12).

In the wailing winds and weeping rains of the old society, amidst the precariousness of the human situation, Chinese Christians did not look for the sweet warmth of life together outside of the closed doors of their fellowship with Christ. Because human life was so unstable and constantly changing, they did not know what would happen from one day to the next. Believing that there was no other way to find peace and tranquility, Christians hid themselves away in Jesus. They curled themselves up "in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff," waiting until the winter was past and the rain had subsided, waiting for the hundred flowers to blossom forth and the birds to announce the coming of Spring. This kind of solitude and escapism, however, created an obstacle to communication with Christ. In the words of "The Song," it prevented Christ, the Lord whom they loved with all their hearts, "seeing her (Christians') comely face and hearing her sweet voice" (2:16b). It is in such circumstances that Chinese Christians have been hearing the call to "Arise ... and come away" during the last thirty years. This is a call to go forth into the world. In walking and working with Christ, in engaging themselves in most ordinary kinds of work and service, Christians can experience the presence of Christ as well as the peace and comfort which comes from God. Christians still come before Christ for their individual prayers and devotions in the early morning and late

evening; but they have also learned to draw on the love and power of Jesus Christ during their busiest moments at work and in service.

The second call was to enter into life in all its fullness. Many Christians sought to live an unsullied life of preserving their purity in order to counter the luxury and dissipation of the old society. Discarding all emotions and desires in the pursuit of the love and holiness of Jesus Christ, they wished to become as "a garden locked, a fountain sealed." But in the search for a purity which would shut the entire world outside the gates of the garden, Christ himself was also shut out. For thirty years Christians have been called to unbolt the door which barred us from the world outside. At this time we realize that this world is Christ's very own garden. It is not a world full of thorns, but one in which the hundred flowers proclaim Christ's loving heart. Rather than a world given over to the wolves, it is one where Jesus himself tends his flock. Today, Chinese Christians continue to pray that we may lead a pure and holy life and we ask our Father in heaven to deliver us from evil and temptation. But Chinese Christians no longer ask to be released from this world because, like Jesus, we also love this beautiful garden of flowers. In the same way we deeply love our own people just as Jesus showed affection for all those whom he was with even though they did not fully recognize him.

For Chinese Christians, there was once an almost unbridgeable chasm between spirituality and human life, between the advancement of spiritual life and conscientious service. But after thirty years, Christians have seen in the incarnate Christ a link between history and eternity and a ladder which can go from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven. The word of life which was in the beginning became the son of man with flesh and blood like God's children in need of salvation. The only begotten Son of our eternal Father took on the most magnificent colors of human nature to depict the true image of God. The flesh and human nature of Christ is used to reveal the essence and radiant glory of God whom humankind has not been able to see: compassion and tenderness for the sick, tears of sympathy for the departed whom we will never see again, forgiveness for those who have stumbled and fallen, righteous anger for wicked hypocrites, anguished pain on behalf of a people facing adversity, an awe-inspiring resolve before Jewish and Roman officials, unceasing efforts on behalf of the masses, the sacrifice of his own life on the cross for the redemption of humankind...

From this understanding of the revelation of the word become flesh in the incarnate Christ, Chinese Christians have arrived at a new truth: The life in which believers partake with Christ of the mystery of God in heaven must be revealed and made manifest here on earth as we conduct ourselves in society; for Christ to take shape in the lives of believers all must be presented and sanctified under the induration of the Holy Spirit.

Christians have traditionally regarded human misery as an important theological question and Chinese Christians have been no exception. We felt the soothing hand of Jesus stroking our heart strings during the most desperate times. Together with millions of our compatriots our own tears were once the only source of sustenance. However, in the last thirty years we have realized that human life and the created world were meant to be a beautiful multihued painting, not a monochrome gray. The first miracle performed by Jesus was not among the sick of Capernaum nor was it when he was with the dying outside the town of Nain. Jesus performed his first miracle during the marriage feast at Cana. This shows that the love and

grace of Jesus Christ is experienced by rejoicing with those who rejoice and cannot be limited to the comfort which is extended in times of suffering. Chinese Christians no longer play up and beautify suffering because we know that Christ is the fulfillment of all and not someone who simply fills in the cracks in our spiritual lives. God wishes to remove the sadness, crying and tears from history at the end of time. He does not wish to use suffering as the only means of disciplining his children.

Over the last thirty years, Chinese Christians have increasingly reflected on the meaning of the redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ in terms of that greatest love of all which is expressed by one who gives up his life for his friends. The suffering of the innocent does not exhaust the Christian meaning of suffering, thus the blood of Jesus of Nazareth is more precious than that of Abel. The deeper theological meaning of suffering lies in its atoning value, or, in the words of the great prophet Isaiah: "We are healed by the lashes which he received, we attain peace through that which he suffered"(Isa. 53). Most Chinese Christians had no share in bearing the sufferings of the people in the catastrophic times of old China, because we did not undergo any sacrifices on behalf of the people's liberation. This not only made Chinese Christians unworthy of the martyrs of the revolution, but even less worthy of the Christ who bore our suffering and took our cares and woes upon himself. But today, Christians are willing to shed their blood for the people and we spare no effort in the performance of our duty. We are ready to exert ourselves to the utmost and even to die unto ourselves so that others may live and experience what the apostle Paul spoke of as Christ's suffering.

Although the twists and turns of history bring misfortunes to many people, we are able to awaken God's wondrous purpose in those who are seeking to understand all things in the light of the Holy Spirit. The saying, "difficulties and hardship can build character" applies not only to the tempering and discipline of our people as a whole, but also to the church of Jesus Christ and the life of the individual Christian. In the same way, the redemptive value of the suffering which has been so sharply experienced by this generation of Christian and non-Christian alike finds its meaning in the life and well-being of the generation and the Church which is to come.

For more than thirty years Chinese Christians have experienced suffering and joy, distress and comfort, perplexity and hope, weakness and strength, together with our own people. No longer choosing to set ourselves apart but standing firmly within the ranks of our people, Chinese Christians face God anew with deep familial affection for compatriots and a sense of identity with our nation. The process whereby Jesus Christ assumed his office as priest shows that only when we identify with our own brothers and sisters in every possible way can we become benevolent and loyal priests in our duties to God.

Chinese Christians view human weakness and insignificance in light of the eternal Lord, but we also are able to see God's love and concern for humankind. We understand human beings in terms of the fall of Adam, but because we Christians ourselves are so very weak, we are able to make allowances for the foolishness and confusion of others. Christians experience a sense of grace which grows with the passage of time as we prostrate ourselves before the precious mercy seat (Heb.9:5), because the grace of Jesus Christ which shines

upon all human beings is reflected in the human search for justice, goodness and love. This light is also reflected in the efforts people make to rise up and clean themselves off after they have stumbled into the dirt. We see that in all human beings the image of the God who created us has never been completely wiped away. We do not believe that anything can replace the salvation which comes through the cross of Jesus Christ. But we are firmly convinced that the true light of Jesus Christ can more easily penetrate a world surrounded by clear blue skies than one which is enclosed by dark clouds. All the efforts which go into creating a society in which goodness flows as naturally as a river runs its course will bring people closer to the God who is the source of all goodness. Instead of driving people away from God, it will create in them a certain attitude which will draw them closer to the Christ who is full of grace and truth.

Chinese Christians still stress the longing for the knowledge of God which comes from the depths of their souls. At the same time we see that God is not only with the people, but also transcends the people and goes through them. Jesus is not only the Lord of the Christians who believe in him; he is also the Cosmic Christ and the Lord of History. The redemptive grace of the cross of Jesus Christ cannot be limited to a little flock of believers, for it is broad enough to extend to the whole of the created world. All things have their origin in God and exist in God's providence so they must therefore find their consummation in Him. This is an unchangeable tendency in the economy of God's salvation. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. Human history is therefore in the hands of God from beginning to end, despite its twists and turns. In anger there is also grace and there is deliverance hidden in judgment. That the Creator God redeemed a church with his precious blood should not suggest that God rejected the rest of humanity. As God creates a New Heaven and a New Earth, he himself will come to dwell in a tent with humankind in the New Jerusalem.

Chinese Christians now view human history in terms of the "birth pangs" which Jesus himself described. In the course of God's salvation of the world, many "birth pangs" will be experienced in history. But a child is produced after each labor and the child brings joy and happiness. Chinese Christians await the return of Jesus with love and hope. What we yearn for is the final transformation of all things, not the destruction and negation of human history. We wait and keep watch not because we are disgusted with human life but with a sense of reverence and fidelity to the tasks with which we have been entrusted by Christ.

We cherish the church to which Christ brought his precious salvation. But most Chinese Christians once thought that the church here on earth was already holy and without flaws, just like the heavenly city of Jerusalem. As we came to see many kinds of injustice in the Chinese church, we could not suppress our anger over how this had been done in the name of Jesus Christ. It was an anger not unlike that which the Apostle Paul once felt towards the Corinthian church, or like his worry over the church in Galatia. Our anger stemmed from the same kind of burning passion which Jesus himself revealed in the cleansing of the Temple. Many Chinese Christians took to the three-self road because, having seen what had become of our church, we experienced deep feelings of distress and remorse before our Lord. Three-self was seen as the process whereby Jesus sanctifies the church having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. Because we had once believed that our love and service in Christ was pure and almost virginal, we came to feel deeply ashamed over our own impurity, as if we had been

branded with an indelible mark of sin and transgression. It was in order to remove this mark of impurity that three-self was necessary. Today, therefore, we treasure the independence of both our people and our church. Because of our clear recollection of past sufferings we understand the words of Zechariah, the priest. His message to us as recorded in Luke I is that the sons and daughters of God will be able to perform their service unashamedly and without fear only after their people have been delivered from the hands of the enemy who has subjected them to endless bullying and humiliation.

In the experience of Chinese Christians, denominationalism was a cause of suffering which is difficult to describe. It tore apart the body of Christ and produced many tears of sadness. Each denomination remained aloof and kept to itself, following and even worshipping this or that "great man" in addition to the Christ who was supposed to be the head of the Church. Denominationalism deepened the wounds in the body of Christ. Today we cannot but prostrate ourselves before the power of God who has brought the Chinese church a vision of an undivided unity which in the past we could only dream about. After many years of joint worship, service and fellowship, Chinese Christians have realized that the most basic thing we have in common is that we are moved by the same spirit to confess Jesus as Lord and that we are baptized by the same spirit to form one body. Just as a body requires different gifts and different limbs to be a body, so the church needs different gifts and different experiences of grace. The Holy Spirit has led the Chinese church to understand and enter into the truth of I Corinthians 12: the different parts of the body must be mutually supportive and concerned for one another, not mutually exclusive and indifferent to one another's needs. Christ's beautiful purpose for this church on the eastern horizon may perhaps be discerned in the nurture of this flower garden now undivided by fences.

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translated by Philip L. Wickeri

5. Three Tasks in Chinese Theological Work Today – Su Deci

I read with great interest the inaugural edition of the Nanjing Theological Review (New Series) and was happy to see Principal K. H. Ting's 'Concerning Theological Education in China,' in which he pointed out the three most pressing problems, and Vice-Principal Chen Zemin's 'To Our Readers,' which focused on the historical responsibility which has fallen on the shoulders of teaching and pastoral personnel, believers and the students and staff of open and soon-to-be opened theological schools. For several months I have been thinking about how the theological problems confronting Chinese Christianity can be correctly identified and hoped in this way to set a direction and define my thinking for my own theological research and teaching. The writings of these men have strengthened my belief and inspired me; they motivated me to take another step toward clarity. As a means of inviting comments from others, I would like to briefly set out my own thoughts on the three tasks confronting Chinese theology.

I. Theoretical guidelines for the substantial construction of our Chinese church on its three-self path must be rapidly promoted.

For thirty years, the course followed by the Three-Self Patriotic Movement has achieved great success. The face of China's Christianity has changed since the time it was regarded as a foreign religion by the Chinese people. It is no longer an organization directed by a foreign power, but has become a church administered by Chinese Christians. This a great event worthy of celebration.

However, though 'the three-self task has been realized,' the task of administering well, supporting well and propagating well requires us to expend even more energy and to redouble our research efforts. Although the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was begun and has developed as a political movement, still, with more than thirty years of practical experience, we can see more and more that the three-self principles are a church truth contained in the Bible. Each time we bring the church's problems to God to ascertain his will, we realize more profoundly the truth that "In everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom. 8:28). The Three-Self Movement is not only a political movement with a historical mission but also the only way by which God enables his people to establish Christ's body on earth.

The time is ripe to consider the issue of 'self-administration.' How to properly establish Christ's body so that when it is "joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love" (Eph. 4:16), is the most important problem confronting Chinese Christians today. For this reason, I feel the time has come to establish a church organization. A look at prevailing circumstances will show that we have already reached the point where this task demands immediate attention.

Denominational structures ceased to exist not long after liberation, and then in 1958, the church began to follow the path of unity and has continued to do so for 26 years. This was, without a doubt, a positive development, and we often thank God that through the

circumstances of the times he enabled us to eliminate differences and undertake the miraculous work of "uniting under the head, Jesus." But we must also admit that in terms of church organization, church management benefited from the original denominations which fulfilled an administrative function the united church could not entirely inherit or replace. Following the Cultural Revolution, in October, 1980, a nationwide association was established, and at the same time many localities started their own associations or church affairs committees. Still, no matter what the name or constitution of these organizations implied, nor what their accomplishments, they did not assume total administrative responsibility. Recently liberalizing tendencies in Christianity have appeared at the grass roots level and I think this is not without some connection to the emergence of these organizations. Different areas have experienced meddling by the religious affairs bureau, and in addition to faults within the religious affairs bureau itself, I think the absence of an organizational structure in the church as a whole similarly encourages government interference in its affairs.

Chinese Christianity can declare to the world with pride that the period of denominationalism in China has become a thing of the past and that we have entered a post-denominational era. This is a remarkable achievement with broad and profound significance for the rest of the world. Still, the present Christian Council is only an interim structure. In any meaningful terms, certainly, the administrative functions of a developed church remain unrealized. This is unfortunate for the future development of both 'successful administration' of our own church and for our relationship with the ecumenical church. The most pressing task confronting Chinese Christianity is to promptly replace this vacuum with a viable church structure.

The Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress was a great turning point in the history of the Chinese Communist Party. It thoroughly criticized 'leftist' mistakes and formulated the correct policy line. The December, 1982, issue of 'Red Flag' magazine contained articles restating and clarifying religious policy during the socialist period. Besides stressing the need to thoroughly implement the policy of religious freedom, it also discussed the party's work in relation to the implementation of the religious policy, including support for the opening of institutions of religious education by each religion. In recent years, the rapid development of China's political and economic situation has been a source of happiness for everyone. In accordance with these favorable external circumstances, I feel even more strongly that, in order to catch up, a church entity needs to be established soon. Otherwise, how can the church match the nation's rapid development?

The objection might be raised that the present situation is not the same as that of 1958. At that time, the path of socialist collectivization was emphasized, but now limited collective and individual ownership, along with local and private control, have successively reappeared. In these decentralizing circumstances, can our church still speak of unity and unification? After some consideration, I have come to the following conclusions about this:

(1) The shape of recent developments proves that, in every kind of endeavor, China has entered a new and unprecedented stage. For this reason, there are attacks on tradition, the

old-fashioned, and impractical systems, relationships and ideas. The goal is to establish a socialist society with unique Chinese characteristics and not look back to former positions.

(2) The Chinese church we want to establish should possess Chinese characteristics. Because we have conditions unknown to churches in other countries, we have no need to assume the burden of their experience and practice in order to testify to and establish the body of Christ. I feel we should especially emphasize this idea that a church should have its own unique characteristics. The principles of its worldly organization should be at one with its spiritual dimension. The Bible teaches us that we should be "eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God ... until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:3-6, 13). Discussion of this question should lead each one of us to receive a vigilant Christian's "call to return to one body."

(3) In the current trend toward reform, we often hear that there must be advances, breakthroughs and new ideas in management and administration as well as in science and technology. As a result, I think that if we study the present social situation, we will learn much that is useful. On the basis of such a study, we can develop a blueprint for church organization. Objective reality can make us aware of the proper balance of the vertical and the horizontal, a difficult task when the main lines of authority are not always apparent. This confusion surrounding authority is a serious defect in the present church. Since the church was unified in 1958, its work has been plagued by numerous shortcomings and problems. One reason for this situation was the 'leftist' disturbances, but another important reason was the aforementioned deficiencies in church organization. To eliminate these shortcomings, we have to depend on the efforts of the church itself and also on the principles of scripture in order to establish and strengthen the organization and administrative work of the church.

Originally, each denomination's ecclesiology differed, but these can still provide us with a broad foundation which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can perhaps engender an ecclesiology suitable for Chinese Christianity. I sincerely believe that when compared with a denominational point of view, the Chinese approach will express God's truth even more fully. This is the first task I see facing China's theology.

II. In regard to the theme of God's reconciliation with humanity, we should promote a more realistic perspective and refine theory to a higher level thereby raising the purity of our basic faith and rejecting the influence of feudal superstition.

The reconciliation of God and humanity is the perpetual theme of Christian theology. Responsibility for this broken relationship rests with man, but reconciliation is founded on Christ's deliverance. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein..." (Psalm 24:1). and he wants "as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). We can see from this that God has a comprehensive plan. This plan constitutes our theology and is simultaneously the elusive object of centuries of study and research.

I believe that when one studies the history of Christianity, including the history of theology, attention should be given to two specific questions. The first is that when analyzing the development of the church's earthly organization, one cannot look only at historical persons and events within the church while neglecting to examine social causes. If we overlook such causes, we can know something without knowing why it happened; we will find the work of God in the church, but miss his accomplishments "in the earth and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." The second question concerns the spiritual realm: the Biblical revelation to humanity of God's plans and deeds is continually being elaborated. People of New Testament times were in an advantageous position vis-à-vis people of the Old Testament period because their "fear has already been abolished by Christ." There is a pernicious tendency to maintain that "the present is not as good as the past," as if ancient people were closer to God and their knowledge of him more thorough. We cannot deny that in addition to the disciples and prophets to whom God directly revealed his truth, there have been many saints throughout history who have had a profound spiritual experience and that God's mysterious revelation has been spread through them. But we cannot be limited by these precedents, because God "may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. 1:17), and lead us all to "truly know him."

As history advances, humanity's understanding of the objective world improves and renews itself. Because of this, our understanding of God's revelation in the Bible also improves and renews itself. The West made China a mission field in the modern period when laissez-faire capitalism was becoming monopoly capitalism and western capital penetrating and plundering the Far East. The theology of reconciliation presented to China during this period, particularly that bearing on interpersonal relationships, could not avoid being marked by its time and class. I deeply believe that as classes are abolished and personal relationships grow more equal than those under capitalism, the consciousness of Christians in a socialist society will grow closer to God's will and will possess more of the new revelation which allows us to accept and know God. I therefore think it is natural for Chinese Christians to seek a theology which reflects this growing awareness of God's purpose.

Realistically, we should also examine other circumstances that greatly imperil the purity of our fundamental faith. The religious policy of party and government is very clear: it protects regular religious activities while opposing and banning feudal superstition. We frequently look at this rather simplistically as merely the policy of the government bureau. But I think that if this policy is to be truly realized, the religious world itself must assume responsibility. Can we Christians say that there are no believers and workers at the grassroots level who are influenced by feudal superstition? I think this is far from the truth.

Vestiges of feudal consciousness in Chinese society are very persistent. Before the New Democratic revolution, feudal superstition had never been vigorously questioned or attacked. When Christianity entered China, it absorbed feudal superstitions in order to attract believers and reinforce the policy of western occupation, and superstition managed to maintain a foothold. Distracted by the slave society background of the Bible, the persistence into the present of primitive elements in religion and the use of common "expressions" to embody spiritual truths, we have neglected the "essence" of God's revelation. Thus, although faith is

very "basic", it can be sullied and confused by a rigid, misguided literalism. These influences are still present in today's urban churches.

In recent years, the number of Chinese Christians has doubled and redoubled, but most have been concentrated in the countryside where feudal consciousness is comparatively strong. Also, it is in the rural areas that the church's organization is weakest. Because of this, non-Christian feudal superstitions enter into Christianity, while the superstitious elements originally present in Christianity meet with greater receptivity. This problem deserves our serious attention.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture ...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10: 7-10). Many Chinese become Christians because in their minds it is no different from consulting an astrologer or a shaman, or relying on a new Jiang Tai Gong for healing. Thus, they do not truly receive Christ's salvation, accept the Christ who died and was resurrected, nor enter the door of the sheep. We cannot therefore complacently believe that the circumstances of church growth in China are like those of the early church where "the Lord supported those who had been saved and daily increased their number."

In distinguishing Christian belief from feudal superstition, the church itself has a great deal of work to do. The two tasks I have discussed above complement each other. If we abolish the influence of feudal superstition, our faith will be purer, our understanding of Biblical truth clearer and our theology will transcend its former restraints. A more highly developed theology of greater practical significance will aid in distinguishing and eliminating feudal superstition. This will lead sheep to enter the gate, and cause the Chinese church to increasingly shine with God's glory.

III. We should welcome the present tides of change so that in the context of a concomitant transformation of social consciousness, the church can develop a contemporary message.

Reform is the foremost modern trend in China. After the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress, the tide of reform swept from the countryside into the cities. As a result, reform of the former irrational economic system which blocked development of production brought with it a change in ideology. People's thinking has broken through old restrictions and recognized and adapted to the fact that the contemporary trend forward is indeed an expression of progress. The reform movement would like to achieve "three benefits": the establishment of a uniquely Chinese socialism; national prosperity; and the economic well-being of the people. We should try our best to encourage Christians to participate actively, to carefully implement 'what all agree to be good,' and to examine with some deliberation whether or not outmoded 'faith' and 'doctrines' have become obstacles to their progress. For example, we should seek to develop theological perspectives on such questions as remuneration for hard work or matching benefits to performance. By examining questions of this kind, we can help believers remove old restraints and advance unencumbered by the past.

The question of "religion in the socialist period" has become a new topic of research for Chinese social science. Religions themselves, however, have a responsibility to actively explore how to control negative elements in the new era, how to turn the negative into something positive, and how to make new contributions. Numerous advanced model personnel have emerged from the midst of believers. These exemplary people indicate that Christianity has had a positive effect both in encouraging its believers to participate in the four modernizations and in promoting a lofty morality. I believe that if we follow this vanguard, and continue to explore and propagate our theological message on a higher and newer plane, Christianity will have a beneficial effect on society far into the distant future.

The tide of reform is present not only in China, but also in the world at large. Although the applicability of phrases like "the third wave" and "the fourth industrial revolution" is still disputed, several western philosophers and scientists continue to use them. The scientific, technological and industrial revolutions have become, after all, an unprecedented wave of change. Even though the qualitative changes these revolutions have brought about do not facilitate the immediate emergence of social revolution, still they prepare the ground for those who follow. Due to the fact that the socialist system has appeared in a number of places around the world, we can say that we already live in a period of world-wide socialist revolution, even if the process will not be completed for several generations, perhaps even for several hundred years.

If we look back at the relation between Christianity and the several preceding socialist revolutions, we are led to think deeply. Christianity originated in Palestine and developed during the Roman Empire. That era was characterized by the transition from a slave to a feudal society. Christianity was then renewed when feudal society changed into capitalism in Europe. It was extensively influenced by the consciousness of the societies established during these two transitions. Thus, in the transition from capitalist society to socialism, can Christianity avoid being an impediment to the advance of history, and, as in the two previous transitions, prepare the way for what is to come? I feel this is not only possible, but essential. A Christianity that already belongs to a socialist society can assume responsibility for itself, and can help carry forward the incipient revolution. On the basis of the above analysis, I believe the Chinese church has an inescapable national responsibility. Although the theological tasks confronting us are formidable, our Christian influence can have a profound and lasting effect on Chinese society.

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translated by Craig Moran

6. Inspirations from Liberation Theology, Process Theology and Teilhard de Chardin – K.H. Ting

I would like to introduce to you students several schools of theology current abroad which may be of some value for us.

In order to enable you to understand a school of theology, I have to bring it into an encounter with the current state of Chinese theological thinking, point out some of its special features and moreover, simplify it as far as possible. In doing this it is difficult to avoid a certain measure of one-sidedness and oversimplification, which is not entirely fair to a school of theology. This is the first point you need to be aware of.

A second reminder is this: in studying theology we need to guard against labeling other people, saying this one is "spiritual" or "of the spirit" while that one is not; this one is "orthodox" and that one "unorthodox." It is easy to set oneself up as judge, but this is of no benefit to the formation, enrichment or progress of one's own theological thinking. This is the attitude of one who is not open to self improvement. When you hear something you do not quite understand, don't immediately condemn. You should make an effort to understand: what is it after all which makes this person raise this argument? What problem does he or she hope to resolve by so doing? Do you have an answer to this question yourself? What is it? That is to say, do not be quick to judge. You must be a listener, you must engage in dialogue. We cannot demand perfection of a new idea. We must be sympathetic, enter into the other's system and see the good intentions behind that system's efforts to answer questions. Of course it is quite all right to disagree with an argument, but we must first understand it well, know what it is saying and what it is not saying. We should not twist or exaggerate it. To begin in this way or to frame an argument in a ridiculous way in order to attack it, are methods unworthy of any theologian or any scholar.

Liberation theology began in Latin America, primarily in Roman Catholic circles. It has been influential in both North America and Asia and has even had a marked influence among evangelicals. China seems to be one of the few places on the entire globe where Latin American liberation theology has had the least influence.

Liberation theology emphasizes the exodus in the Bible. The exodus is an extremely important event by which God acts in the history of the Hebrews. He hears the cries of the Hebrew people in the midst of their suffering and enables them, after a struggle, to escape Egypt and gain liberation. So many books of the Old Testament tell us that throughout all the years following the exodus, the Israelis, the Jews, have always returned to this event. "God has done a great thing for us." The great thing of this phrase almost always refers to the exodus. The exodus event left a very deep imprint on the Hebrew nation.

Besides the emphasis on the exodus, another Biblical passage which liberation theology makes particular use of is the Magnificat of Mary beginning in Luke 1:46: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,... he has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the

mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away." Another passage frequently quoted is Jesus' words in the synagogue in Nazareth found in Luke 4: "...preach good news to the poor,... proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Still another is Matthew 25: 31-46, which speaks of the final judgment based on our treatment of the lowliest of humanity.

An especially important idea of liberation theology is its belief that God is not "unbiased" or "impartial." The partiality of God is directed to the poor; God sides with the poor. The most representative of the liberation theologians is the Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutierrez, who wrote the book titled simply "Liberation Theology," making him the first to raise the banner of liberation theology. He noted that traditional theology focuses its attention on non-believers, while ignoring non-persons. Traditional theology is insensitive to these people. He asks what significance it can have to say to one who leads the life of a non-person, "you are a child of God." This theologian is even more concerned about the poor of this world, the cast-offs, the alienated, those trodden underfoot by others; these are people who lead a less than human life. He feels that theology should be concerned about these people and not focus its attention exclusively upon non-believers. He believes that the exodus expresses God's partiality for the poor of this earth.

Some of the terminology of liberation theology is now current in international theological circles. One of these terms is praxis. At times this term refers to the general practice of the people, sometimes it refers to the Christian's practice under the guidance of theology. Liberation theology has no high esteem for the greater part of systematic theology. It proposes that one may gain more of the stuff of which theological thinking is formed through practice.

Liberation theology emphasizes that it is a theology of the world; it advocates entering into the world. Gutierrez says that the central theological problem is not life after death, but life after birth. Whether one goes to heaven or hell after death is not the central theological question. The central theological problem should be the human world, how to enable people to live a life of human dignity after birth.

Many liberation theologians oppose developmentalism. There are some in the world who are continually speaking of the development of the nations of the third world, or their opening up, but these people do not speak of liberation. Liberation theology believes that the problems of Latin America and the rest of the third world are not primarily those of opening up to outside interests or of development, but of a fundamental transformation of the social system. The more these countries open themselves to foreign capital investment, the greater becomes their dependency on foreign countries. The Brazilian Archbishop Helder Camara has said, "A man can give aid to an individual and be called a saint, but let him appeal for justice and he may be called a subversive." They feel that in this twentieth century the greatest love lies in creating a just society. They say that the real question is not development but independence. Lack of independence carries with it oppression and every type of suffering, so the point of departure for the people must be the search for liberation and not the increase in the average annual per capita income.

There are many schools within liberation theology, and at least a portion of those would say explicitly that the use of violence cannot be avoided at times, because the oppressors make use of a great deal of violence to maintain their control, and this means that those opposed to that control are forced to use violence in overthrowing the system. At least several score of liberation theology priests have been violently murdered by the conservative forces in Latin America, or have been assassinated in the social struggle. These events have forced the people to consider the question of using violence to repay violence.

Liberation theologians do their utmost to maintain normal relations with church authorities and the upper strata of the Catholic Church hierarchy. They have established many basic Christian communities outside church buildings. In such small gatherings, the priest comes to celebrate the mass, to pray and to read the Bible together with all the others. At times each one takes a turn to speak, to say what insight he or she gained from reading the Bible. I have read three books in which these ordinary fishermen, workers and peasants have spoken one by one after taking part in the mass and reading the Bible lesson. This is a form of organization which liberation theology has produced.

Liberation theology represents a type of Biblical hermeneutic and method. When we study the Bible, we all like to know what the historical background of a book or passage is. We realize that the more we know about the historical background, the more we are able to understand the text. Liberation theology is not at all opposed to researching the background, but they say that this is not always very productive. We have no way to rediscover the background of many things in the Bible. What is important, they feel, is to understand what light has accumulated as this passage passed from generation to generation, from one group of Christians to another. For example, when we study the Old Testament Book of Exodus, we must know not only the historical background, but how Hebrews and Christians have understood it, how they have accepted it throughout the many years through which it has come down to us. Such knowledge is precious. That is to say, that when we read a passage in the Bible today, we must be aware that this passage has gained its significance as a property of the catholic church. Much light which has come down through history is stored up there, and we must add it to our own knowledge. When we read the Bible today, we also bring new light to it. Even the communal discoveries of little-educated fishermen and farmers within their basic Christian communities are precious. As I understand it, liberation theologians lay a great deal of stress upon reading the Bible with a democratic spirit. And this is a point which we also stress.

With regard to propagating the gospel, they believe that the mission of the church is not simply to bring Christ to the people. Christ was sent by the Father and continually comes into the world and works through the Holy Spirit at times and in places he himself chooses. Therefore, the mission of the church is not to bring Christ into a Christ-less world but to recognize Christ where he is at work and then bring this recognized Christ and his actions to the poor as the good news. The mission of the church is primarily to proclaim to the people the acceptable year of the Lord. Due to the subordination of all things to the incarnate, risen Christ, Christ is already in the world. The church, relying on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, recognizes Christ, and then, like the disciple whom Jesus loved, points out: "It is the

Lord." The church's duty to bear witness lies in pointing out the actions of the Lord. This being the case, propagation of the gospel is not only bringing Christ to the poor, but discovering Christ in the poor. It is not only bringing Christ to people, but bringing Christ out of people, because there is already a bit of Christ in the people of this world. Bringing Christ out of them is also propagating the gospel.

There are those among liberation theologians who do not set a high value on the ecumenical movement. One of them puts it this way, "It would be necessary that the myth of the Christian community disappear, for it prevents the recognition of the division of society into classes and the recognition of class struggle." Gutierrez calls the ecumenical movement "a marriage between senior citizens." He, of course, is being humorous. He further says that the church cannot be united until humanity is united. This view is one we Chinese Christians can somehow appreciate. We believe that the sign of the church should first be holiness, and next "oneness," or "catholicity." To raise "oneness" to an inappropriately high level, and make everything serve "oneness" often confuses right and wrong.

The influence of liberation theology has reached to many places throughout the world, and has produced some radical schools of theology, black theology in the U.S. for example, which is an expression of liberation theology in North America. Women in capitalist society feel that they are oppressed and feminist theology, which believes that women have a particular sensitivity to the truth of Christianity, has been inspired by liberation theology. Women have been repressed for thousands of years and now demand liberation. Following liberation, they will be able to make a unique contribution to the richness of Christ. Opposed to paternalism, feminist theology's proposals have included women preachers and women's ordination.

Liberation theology says little about international political problems, so I cannot speak of its position on the Soviet Union or on China. They are very sympathetic to Cuba because they feel that Cuba represents liberation, and they have expressed some friendliness towards China. Gutierrez has given a talk specially on China in which he was very affirmative of New China. When books on liberation theology mention those nations which have already achieved liberation, China is sometimes mentioned in addition to Cuba. I have not seen any mention of the Soviet Union. Liberation theology does not seem to oppose the Soviet Union, but neither does it endorse it. Its critiques of the U.S. and of western capitalism are many.

When liberation theology appeared in the 1960's, people saw it as simply one school among many. When the Latin American Bishops' Conference met at Medellin in 1968, liberation theologians were invited as consultants and the resolutions which emerged from the conference used a great deal of liberation theology terminology. This was not due to any endorsement of liberation theology on the part of many bishops, but because the bishops relied on a group of theologians to draft their statements. The Medellin Conference documents are a concentrated expression of liberation theology views. The materials were distributed around the globe and many theologians endorsed them; an even greater number opposed them. Ten years later the Latin American Bishops' Conference met again in Puebla. Pope John Paul II personally attended this meeting. He did not dare express his opposition to liberation theology because it was already quite prevalent among the people. But neither,

it seems, was he willing to allow liberation theology to continue to enlarge the scope of its influence, so his comments were equivocal. The public's criticism was that the Pope had come to cast a chill on the proceedings. Let me quote two of the Pope's comments. The first is "Priests are not social workers." The meaning of this remark is quite clearly unfavorable to liberation theology. The other is, "Class struggle is not a path to social order." It is the present "social order" he wishes to maintain.

Many liberation theology priests took part in the uprising in which Nicaragua overthrew its fascist overlords and established a democratic regime. Today, three state ministers of Nicaragua are priests; one is foreign minister, another is minister of culture. The head of the National Campaign to Eliminate Illiteracy Committee is also a priest. The Pope wanted them to resign, saying that priests could not participate in government. After a priest serving as an American congressman obeyed orders to resign the Pope could deal more easily with the priests in Nicaragua. But according to reports the Nicaraguan priests have refused to resign. They say that in principle, it is undoubtedly correct that priests should not participate in government, but that in special circumstances there should be exceptions. One priest said that in normal circumstances a priest should not go to work as a driver, but when the revolutionary movement required it, he did drive a truck.

Foreign friends frequently ask: "What is the attitude of Chinese Christians toward liberation theology?" We support liberation, we also value theology. We feel that theology should be liberated from the old traditions, from the fetters imposed upon it by capitalist society. This we advocate wholeheartedly. Liberation theology marshals a great quantity of facts to expose the darkneses of society - colonialism, imperialism, etc. - and it plays a great enlightening role. We Chinese Christians appreciate the Latin American liberation theologians' desire to transform the social system. They advocate that theology be more in dialogue with social science and less in conversation with philosophy and we also find this very good. As for the partiality of God, that God certainly does discriminate between rich and poor, it was enlightening for us Chinese Christians in our reading of the Bible that liberation theology pointed this out. Liberation theology is such a good thing that it hurts us not to be able to endorse it in its entirety. But in the final analysis, many Chinese Christians believe that the eternal theme for Christianity and its theology should not be political liberation as this is a duty limited to a certain period, but should rather be reconciliation of humanity with God. If we do not have this reconciliation between God and humanity but only liberation as our theme, this is not good enough. Even though we in China have already been liberated for over thirty years, many Christians feel it would be very difficult to make this turn in our faith. Reconciliation between God and humanity is the eternal theme of Christian theology. Under this theme there will certainly be discussion of social and political liberation. The latter cannot be easily denied, but they are not the main theme. China has experienced political liberation, but the question of reconciliation between God and humanity still exists. Some liberation theologians give a broad meaning to "liberation," and this is fine in our view, but some do not. One professor puts it thus in one of his essays: "I still contend that the gospel is identical with the liberation of poor people from sociopolitical oppression." He says it is "identical," he does not say "supports," if he had said "supports," we could agree; if he had said "includes," that would also be good; "requires," would also be fine. But

he says "identical," identifying the gospel with social and political liberation. We have reservations about this.

Since liberation in our country, there have been significant changes and improvements in people's lives. There have also been great changes and improvements in people's spirits. We all welcome these things very much. But the changes we see in China cannot be equated with becoming the new being in Christ of which Paul speaks in his letters. Liberation is extremely important, but liberation does not engage, let alone solve, the question of reconciliation with God. Augustine once said that God has put into our hearts a restlessness, so we can not find rest until we find it in God. Under any social system there are many who yearn for this type of rest. We must not lump this kind of rest together with political liberation.

Liberation theology speaks of God's partiality for the poor. There is enlightenment here. But the poor are not the Messiahs of the world, as if it were only necessary to liberate the poor and they could then liberate the world. We Chinese Christians do not see it this way. It is right that we should sympathize with and support the poor. The poor are more disposed to accept the truth of revolution. This is true. But the difficulties in social transformation and the ending of poverty are not to be overlooked. We must not idealize or absolutize the poor. We Chinese people want to improve our living standards but we are not egalitarians. Rigid insistence that everyone's material conditions improve simultaneously and all equally, - if the per capita income for the entire population is 500 yuan, then each one must receive 500 yuan, no individual should receive 1000 yuan, - this kind of egalitarianism does not work. We do want to grow richer, but there will always be some who grow richer first, some later. If the poor are liberators because of their poverty, then the landlords of the past, once their land had been appropriated and they had become poor, might also become the force for revolution. Those who had been poor to begin with and had now benefited through their labor and become rich first, would then become targets of revolution. Is this not the same old doctrine of "perpetual revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat"? We have had a taste of this during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. Society was thrown into chaos. In pre-liberation society, as a general rule, the poor were often the oppressed, the rich often the oppressors. It has been this way for the most part, but we cannot define revolution as the poor opposing the rich. The laws by which societies develop are not so simple. Particularly since once the people have stood up and gained liberation and live under a people's government, to call once more for the poor to oppose the rich leads to social chaos. This is to damage the very cause of the people themselves. After the problems of imperialist aggression, land reform and the ownership of the means of industrial production have been solved, we need stability and unity in order to raise the standard of living, that is, to allow the people to make the transition from poverty to wealth, though not uniformly.

We need to remind ourselves that, in spite of their poverty, the poor may have accepted quite a lot of the ideology of the ruling classes. They are not necessarily the most conscientized section of the population. We should not idolize the poor. More often than not, it is not the poor themselves who produce the correct theory. It is often only those comparatively better off intellectuals who live in more stable conditions who are able to develop revolutionary theory.

Although Chinese Christians, situated politically in a post liberation situation, have these reservations about liberation theology, we yet believe that liberation theology is a great and new thing in the history of Christianity. It is without peer, surpassing many traditional systematic theologies. I treasure it greatly, and have little sympathy for certain people who oppose it.

Is liberation theology a ploy or a plot on the part of the ruling classes to lure people from Marxism to religion? No. In Latin America for the most part, Marxism has not yet arrived. For Protestants and Catholics in the third world, Marxism does not have a great deal of drawing power. Liberation theology leads religious believers from an endurance of suffering to reality, to consciousness and to struggle. Its twenty odd years of history are evidence that it is not leading the masses from struggle to compliance.

Those who like to equate religion with opium in dealing with any religious phenomenon feel rather awkward faced with liberation theology. To say that religion is opium is truly an oversimplification. A person under the soporific influence of opium would not advocate liberation, initiate struggle or sacrifice his or her life in the revolutionary cause. If liberation theology were nothing more than opium, it would not have been necessary for the Pope to go to Latin America to put a damper on it, nor would the reactionary South African government need to oppose black theology on such a grand scale, nor confiscate its publications. I think a more scientific attitude would be to undertake a careful analysis of all the various types of religious phenomena, and to recognize that some religious phenomena are better than others, rather than viewing them as a monolith.

Teilhard de Chardin was a French archaeologist and a Jesuit priest. He spent many years in China doing archaeological work, taking part in the discovery of Peking Man. He stayed in the Chinese interior all during the Sino-Japanese War and died in the 1950's in the U.S.

If liberation theology has something in common with Chairman Mao's "Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan," then I feel that Teilhard's theology somewhat resembles Mao's poetry. For example, like that of Mao's "Northland Scenes", his language is spare but his vision broad, painting for us a magnificent picture.

His theological vision, like that of liberation theology, is not limited to the question of belief and unbelief. Some theologies revolve back and forth around the belief/unbelief axis. Like that of Teilhard, liberation theology certainly does not deny the distinction between the two, but their field of theological vision is much broader, surpassing this question.

As I understand it, Teilhard wants us to see the grand purpose behind God's creation along with the whole process of that undertaking. This is what he wants us to set our sights on. Some may ask, what is left of our Christianity if we do not circle round the question of belief and unbelief or of salvation? Teilhard says, the riches of Christian faith are many. It does not merely deal with that one question.

In Teilhard's view, human history is not the whole of history. History begins with the first moment of creation and continues till its end. For the greater part of historical time, there was no humanity. Humans are but animals which have appeared within the "last few moments" of this long history. According to Teilhard, all of history or the whole of time is the history of God working to realize his goal.

Let us set humanity and the issue of belief and unbelief aside for the moment and turn our attention to God.

What is God's purpose? It is to bring creation to the emergence of a partner. This partner whom God yearns to create would put off all baseness, would be a person in the image of God. What then is the image of God? God is a community, a trinity. The concept of trinity tells us that God is a group, a collective. Thus, God's creation must lead to a human community in the universe, or a communal people. God wants to enlarge his community. The community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not enough. It must be enlarged, to enable all humanity to enter. In Teilhard's words, "God is not will-to-power but will-to-fellowship." We must first focus our attention on God, only then will we be able to understand Teilhard.

People say, God is omnipotent. If then he desires humanity to be united to him, a humanity wholeheartedly willing to maintain this unity with God to appear on the earth, then God has only to say the word and it will be done. Why then has it been so difficult for such a humanity to be realized? The answer is that consciousness and free will are extremely important. If humanity wants to attain the enjoyment of this unity with God, it must first have consciousness and free will. If these are not present, if humanity is passive, then how can we speak of unity? For example, in the film "The Red Detachment of Women," a young woman was urged to marry a piece of wood representing her deceased fiancé, to put it in the bed and say it was her husband. Could those two be said to be united in any way? Could they become any kind of community? Of course not. The most God could gain by command would be a piece of wood, a machine or a robot. There could be no mutual love between God and a robot, no community could be established. Therefore, creation cannot be other than a very very long historical process. Teilhard could not agree with the view that God undertook creation within six days and then rested forever. Such a viewpoint is completely out of tune with his own. His view is that God creates continually and that he will continue to do so. The process of creation is a very very long one, with the eventual appearance of a new humanity as its goal. The appearance of this new humanity coincides with the completion of the new being in Christ which Paul spoke of in his letters. What a vast process it is.

We are humans, not gods. When we speak of the whole process of creation it is not easy for us to describe in detail, we speak in generalities. Teilhard has not spoken in great detail either. In his poems, Chairman Mao touches upon the Tang and Song dynasties, using a few people to represent ancient Chinese history. It is not necessary to describe the characters of Ts'ao Ts'ao or Ch'ien Lung one by one. At least Chairman Mao does not do this, a sketchy reference is enough to evoke the response. Teilhard's theology is this kind of poetry, sweeping through history, vast and daring, not an exercise in the detailed brushwork of traditional Chinese painting.

One point is most prominent in Teilhard's thinking. It is that creation is not only a process of creation, it is also a process of salvation, a process of sanctification and a process of education. Creation, salvation and sanctification are joined together as one.

Some Christians tend to make a clear and sharp distinction among the three persons of the trinity. God the Father is the Creator; the Son is the Savior; the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. There is even a view, which began with the Montanist heresy, which simply divides history into three periods: the first period is that of the creation by God the Father, then comes the period of salvation by the Son, while the present is the period of the Holy Spirit. Teilhard does not play up these distinctions. He emphasizes the unity of creation, salvation and sanctification. The separation of the three persons sometimes easily leads to setting the lord of salvation in opposition to the creator. This can lead to a renewal of the Arian heresy of the early church which had to be dealt with in a series of Councils. Historically, the church has not emphasized the three persons as separate. Rather the emphasis has been that, although there are three persons, there is one God. Creation, salvation and sanctification are three aspects of the ongoing work of the one God.

To separate nature from revelation or to deny natural revelation lead to the same bad result, that is, to debase creation, to form an opposition between the first and second persons of the trinity, and at the same time to weaken the role of the third.

When the Nicene Creed mentions the Holy Spirit, it says "through the word of the prophets." The purpose of this is to indicate the pre-existence of the Holy Spirit. Christianity emphasizes the pre-existence of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. Christ did not first pass from nothingness to existence on Christmas eve, nor did the Holy Spirit first pass from nothingness into existence after Christ's ascension. Christ and the Holy Spirit had been at work long before. Right from the beginning, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were working together. It is in order to safeguard the inseparability of creation, salvation and sanctification that mention is made of the pre-existence of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We know that the gospel represented by Teilhard and liberation theology is not that of the usual so-called social gospel. Formerly the social gospel in the west was quite simple and its Christology was particularly simple: Christ was a great man, a great teacher. We should learn from him and use him as our model. It did not have a New Testament Christology, while Teilhard has a very highly developed one. He does not only speak of Jesus the Nazarene, he often speaks of the Cosmic Christ. This Cosmic Christ is mentioned in numerous places in the New Testament. Verses 1-3 of the first chapter of the gospel of John are as follows: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Jesus Christ was not only a teacher, nor was he only a savior, he participated in creation. And without him, was not anything made. This is the Cosmic Christ. This idea is also found in John 8:58 and 17:24, in I Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 3:9-11, etc.; all these you can look up yourselves. Colossians 1:15-20 is particularly worthy of attention: "He (the beloved Son) is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through

him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent." When I was a student, our professors never told us to memorize the Bible, but there were two verses which one theology professor hoped we would memorize; this was one of them, the other was Hebrews 1: 1-3: ... (a Son) whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power." Teilhard wants us to become reacquainted with such a Cosmic Christ, the pre-existent Christ.

What then is history in the palm of the creator, savior and sanctifier God? In general, it is divided into the following three periods: first is the stage preparatory to the appearance of organic life. At the start of history, there were no organisms at all. This first stage was a very long one. God was preparing the way for organisms. Because Teilhard was an archaeologist, he was particularly interested in this and he wrote much on this period which I do not understand very well. The second period lasted from the appearance of organisms until the advent of humankind. It was again a long process. Organisms gradually divided, subdivided and grew more complex until humanity appeared. In the beginning organisms were extremely simple. Through division, subdivision and increasing complexity, the human being was finally produced of these organisms. He (Teilhard) felt that humanity's appearance was an especially significant point in history. The third phase will be the achievement of human community. Humanity has appeared but the community is not yet accomplished. Contradictions still erupt among people. What will bring this stage to an end? The realization of community. This is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the saving work of Jesus Christ and the creation work of God.

God is the Father, but his unlimited power is restricted by love. God's omnipotence is great, but his love binds the use of that omnipotence. The human being God awaits is of a genre unique among all creation, of a superior standard. The relationship between God and the human being is not that of architect to building, as when an architect draws up a plan and later a building is made. We cannot look at the relationship between God and humanity in these terms. Likewise, we cannot say that the human being is a clock whose designer or maker is God. It is not thus. The relationship between God and humanity is that of parent to child, one of education and growth. God wants to foster a self in the midst of the universe, one which will be capable of correctly practicing the freedom of choice. As a self, naturally it should have freedom and be able to choose freely, because without this freedom, we could not speak of a self. However because this self already knows God's love it would not be willing to choose wrongly. Only the conscious and voluntary use of freedom to make the correct choice is the mark of a humanity desirable in God's eyes, the new being. Up to the present, according to Teilhard, we are a half-finished product of past creation or evolution, an object needing further transformation, or further humanization. We already have this consciousness to some extent, we are in some degree willing to establish a community with God. Therefore, in this sense, we are half-finished products. In spite of this, God wants to use us to advance history, evolution and creation. This is the process by which half-finished products are tempered.

In Romans 5:15 we find the following idea: the free gift surpasses the trespass. We acknowledge that the human being is a sinner. We hope that the human being will be able to know himself or herself as a sinner and through this accept the saving power of Christ. But we do not speak of sin as something terribly overwhelming, blowing it out of all proportion, as if there were nothing in the world but sin. According to this passage from Paul, the free gift in the grace of Jesus Christ far surpasses the sin in Adam. He puts it this way, "But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." Yes, Adam's sin affected the whole of humanity, but the grace of Christ for all humanity was victorious over the effect of Adam's sin. Yes, the sin of the one man Adam implicated all of us, but the grace of the one Christ played an even greater role. Let us pay attention to this word "abounded". This means that the decisive factor is the grace of Jesus Christ, not the tarnished legacy of Adam. When some Christians evangelize or write essays today, they speak of the brand of Adam on humankind as if it were extremely profound indeed, more so than the mark of the grace of Christ. Our whole humanity is in solidarity with Christ and this far surpasses our oneness with Adam. The benefit Christ brings to humanity far surpasses the harm of Adam. Grace is greater than sin. The grace of the new Adam is stronger than the sin of the old Adam. Because of this, the message of the gospel is God's love, Christ's grace. Original sin is not the gospel. Original sin has already bowed down under Christ's original grace.

When we read Teilhard's theological works, we feel he wants us to become involved in a process, that is, to pass from a relatively small Christ who is united only to members of the church, to a much greater Christ imbued with all creation. Christ is not united only to the church. He is not merely Lord of the church. Christ brims with all creation. Teilhard wants us to make the transition to such a recognition. This is also to make the transition from a theology which revolves around belief and unbelief, which is limited to the idea of salvation - a narrower kind of theology - to a recognition of the greatness, glory, holiness and grace of the triune God and see God's work of creation, salvation and sanctification in the universe.

The so-called eschaton is the culmination of this third phase. This unique breed of humanity formed of unique qualities, is one which both enjoys freedom and chooses correctly, one able to unite with both God and others. When this humanity emerges, the miracle of God's creation is realized and God is satisfied. When this phase draws to a close, the new Jerusalem is at hand. This is an eschatological view which people can more readily understand. And this eschaton is also the beginning of another new phase, though we have no way to conjecture what that phase will be like. Teilhard put it this way: "Someday, after we have mastered the wind, the waves, the tide and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love; and then for the second time in the history of the world man will have discovered fire." We know what an important role the first discovery of fire played in the advance of human civilization. This ability greatly enriched our human culture. The second discovery of fire means that we humans will be able to direct well this resource of love, giving it free reign. This means autonomy and the ability to take care of each other. The point at which this goal is reached, Teilhard calls Omega. Omega is the final letter of the Greek alphabet. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the origin and the culmination. This is Teilhard's eschatology.

Teilhard's thought is very broad. It does not revolve within some small circle. He has perceived that Christ is the Lord of the cosmos, the master of history. Thus as a person, Teilhard himself is extremely composed. He sees all truth, goodness and beauty and affirms that this is of Christ, is of God. Once someone took him to the Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai and he was so taken by the Jade Buddha, even though he was a Christian, that he said, "I love the Buddha of Jade because it tells me of something that Christianity must annex. I feel more and more strongly the need to free our religion from everything that is specifically Mediterranean." What I understand here is that the Jade Buddha is a thing of beauty which has accumulated within it the sweat and blood of countless people seeking after goodness and truth, and nothing of beauty is outside Christ. Therefore, Christianity ought to annex it. The Vatican is located in the Mediterranean area and Teilhard felt that true human religion should cast off such a narrow character. It could then assimilate much more of the things of truth, goodness and beauty. No wonder the Vatican did not like Teilhard, and for several dozen years did not permit publication of his books.

Teilhard's good English friend, the natural scientist Joseph Needham, specialized in the history of science in China and held views close to those of Teilhard. He extended these to modern world history. In an essay on China, after speaking highly of New China, he said, "We have no reason to suppose that our present condition of civilization is the last masterpiece of universal organization, the highest form of order of which Nature is capable. I believe there are many grounds for seeing in collectivism of the kind which we can approve, a form of organization as much above the outlook of middle-class nations as their form of order is superior to that of primitive tribes. I think it would not be going too far to say that the transition from economic individualism to the common ownership of the world's productive resources by humanity will be a step similar in nature to the transition from lifeless proteins to living cell, and from primitive savagery to the first community, so clear is the continuity between inorganic, biological and social order. By this point-of-view the future state of social justice is seen as not at all a fantastic utopia, not as a desperate hope, but a form of organization having the full force of the authority of evolution behind it." This is true, good Teilhardism. Teilhard believed that, although those who know Jesus in the world today are few in number, we should view this world in the light of the ascended Christ. This is to say that the position of this world has already undergone a change. The incarnation of Christ and his resurrection and ascension have made a qualitative change in the world. Christ is not only the forebear, priest and king of Christians; but more, he is the first born and eternal logos, Son of God and one who upholds all things.

The Holy Spirit does not work only in the church; he works first in the world of which the church is but a part. The church is a standard for the world, reminding people that there exists a spiritual dimension, a divine dimension. Teilhard says, "I believe the world will not be converted to the hopes of Christianity, until Christianity is converted to the hopes of the world to make them divine." Whether liberation theologians or Teilhard, all believe that the church can only be a small organization which has a role to play in the world. The Lord Jesus said, you are the salt of the earth; he did not say you must make this whole world into a large block of salt. He said you are the yeast of the world and this yeast must work within the

world to make it into bread; he certainly did not say that the whole world must become a large cake of yeast. Thus the whole church will always be a rather small organization.

Belief/unbelief is still an issue and this is not a matter of indifference. All people in the world were created by the Heavenly Father, but not everyone is a friend of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ yearns for friendship, but those who can be counted as friends are the minority. Christians know God, we know Christ, we should have a deeper apprehension of God's intentions than other people to enable God to better enjoy unity with us. But we cannot simply say that those who do not believe in God are not then his sons and daughters, even less can we say that they are all his enemies. God is extremely great and in the case of China, for example, his love is not confined to the several million Christians. God's tolerance is so great, even to the point that in spite of the fact that so many people today do not recognize his existence and do not thank him, God is not small-minded; he feels only pity for them. He earnestly hopes that they will come to know him. God is not like us human beings who can only write essays on the question of belief and unbelief.

You may have noticed that I have some appreciation for Teilhard de Chardin's theological viewpoint. Where he disappoints me is that he is after all a product of French culture and French higher education. He has his class and cultural limitations which are mostly expressed in his eurocentrism. His main interest in the world outside the west is archaeological. He feels that the modern orient has little of value to offer to the whole of humankind. His orient is "in a state of inertia." Our resistance to Japan was a great event, and Teilhard was resident in China at the time, but he watched our people's struggle without recognizing its historical significance. He only expressed sorrow at the suffering caused by the war. Also, he seems to underestimate the obstruction to historical progress caused by the rampant forces of evil.

This represents my understanding of Teilhard. I have only read a few of his books and some books and essays about him that others have written, so this introduction is subjective and may contain things which Teilhard himself would feel misrepresent his views. I can do nothing about that but hope that you can correct these things when you read him for yourselves.

Upon entering the twentieth century, the western world view underwent a momentous change. Originally, under the influence of Euclid, Galileo and Newton, people saw the world as a stable, static, solid body. Einstein's theory of relativity and the theories which followed it pointed out that the macrocosm and the microcosm were in a constant state of movement and change. From Plato on, philosophy was concerned with being and saw this being as static. Today, people recognize that everything - including the smallest unit of matter - is changing and "becoming," and even a God who is not in the slightest influenced by the world, who does not undergo the most minimal change, is hard to imagine. The essentials of dialectics, especially quantitative change, metamorphosis and integration/polarization are increasingly accepted by more and more intellectuals. In such an intellectual atmosphere, Alfred North Whitehead put forward the concept of process philosophy. Its influence on theology led to the appearance of process theology. "Process" implies change, development,

the new superseding the old, affirming that the fundamental state of reality and of objects is not static.

Process theology speaks thus of God: Process theology affirms, indeed gives prominence to, God as love. It might be said that this is commonplace in every school of theology: How can it be the main feature of one school? We must make a fine distinction here.

In "Process and Reality," Whitehead points out that in substance, traditional Christianity easily tends toward three types of error in its view of God: seeing God as "the ruling Caesar, or as the ruthless moralist, or as the unmoved mover." He believes that what traditional theology overlooks is that "Galilean vision," which is to see God as love. The God who is usually highly praised by the churches is the one to whom it "gives the attributes which belong exclusively to Caesar." It sees him "in the image of an imperial ruler," or "in the image of a personification of moral energy," or "in the image of an ultimate philosophical principle," some sort of "being itself," the first cause of everything outside himself, but absolutely unaffected by anything whatever outside himself.

When process theology speaks of those things which belong to the nature of God, the first one affirmed is his love. His omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, his eternity, his transcendence, his absolute righteousness and so on, are all placed in subservience to this.

"God is the Cosmic Lover, both causative and affected." Norman Pittenger and Schubert Ogden say that God is "the first cause and the final effect." God is intimately connected to the world. He is not only the creator, he also receives the responses the world makes to him, and makes to these his own response. This does not negate God's divinity, because God's divinity does not imply a distance from the world nor being unaffected by it.

Divinity implies inexhaustibility, eternal devotion and the ability to. withstand the provocations of evil, absorb it and turn it to the service and increase of the good. Whitehead said, "Things matter to him and they have their consequences in him." Divinity first and foremost signifies the inexhaustibility of true love in the universe and immanence points to the coexistence of this true love with the entire created world. God's divinity in no way implies indifference.

Process theologians use the term "panentheism," a term first used by the German philosopher K.C. Klaus (1781 - 1832). Its implications are that God includes and permeates the entire universe; every component part of universe has its existence in him. What distinguishes this from pantheism is that God's existence surpasses the universe and may by no means be exhausted by it.

If the God of religion is not also the God of the universe or the God of the world, if God cannot convey to humankind a vision as regards the world, but is only concerned with religion, then he cannot be the most high. He may be no more than the object of worship for certain people.

This passage from Pittenger illustrates the point well:

"As I read the writings of some of the greatest theologians in Christian history - often Origen, certainly St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin - I am meeting in each of them two different personalities. On the one hand there is the man with a deep faith in God, often a vigorous insistence on his loving care and his gracious concern with creation, and with a feeling of personal relationship which is enjoyed between a prevenient Lover and a creaturely lover-in-the-making who seeks to respond to that prevenience. This is prominent and deeply moving. On the other hand, there is a theological position which seems quite different, with its insistence on absoluteness, unrelatedness, unchangeableness, and impassibility or inability to share in the world's anguish."

Originally, a systematic theology should have enabled us to consciously seek a unified, harmonious whole in theological thought, but in reality a person's theological knowledge can quite unconsciously maintain a number of internal contradictions.

What is "God's glory?" Pittenger puts it this way: "All is for God's `greater glory'. And that glory is no majestic enthronement as almighty ruler and self-exalted monarch, but is the sheer love in-act which generously gives, graciously receives and gladly employs whatever of worth or value has been accomplished in a world where God is faithfully active to create more occasions for more good at more times and in more places."

In the early church there was an "Epistle to Diognetus," containing the following passage which process theologians admire:

"Did God send for him, as a human mind might assume, to rule by tyranny, fear or terror? Far from it! He sent him out of kindness and gentleness... He willed to save men by persuasion, not by compulsion, for compulsion is not God's way of working.... He sent him in love, not in judgment.... For God showed himself to be a true friend of man. O, the overflowing kindness of God towards men! God did not hate us, nor drive us away, nor bear us ill-will."

Charles Hartshorne wrote a book entitled "The Divine Relativity," which was aimed at the singular emphasis on the absoluteness of God of traditional theology. "In each moment of God's life there are new unforeseen happenings in the world which only then have become knowable. Hence, God's concrete knowledge is dependent upon the developments in worldly actualities. God's knowledge is always relativized by, in the sense of internally related to, the world." (quoted in Cobb and Griffin, "Introduction to Process Theology").

Not every event in the human world has been decided by God. Due to the fact that God respects human freedom, events undecided by him are many. The God manifest in Christ cannot but be such a God. God is love and only union can satisfy love. And only those beings possessing freedom can aspire to union. Only beings which can choose either well or wrongly have true freedom. These are the constraints accepted by God's omnipotence and omniscience. A fine painting has no prior existence before the artist paints it, whether in heaven or in the mind of God. In spite of the fact that color, form and the painter's innate capabilities are all created and given by God, this painting is a creation of the painter in his

or her freedom. No matter whether he or she believes in God or not, God is constant in his respect for the freedom which belongs to the painter.

To facilitate understanding of this, Whitehead hypothesizes the primordial nature and the consequent nature of God. The former exists prior to and outside of creation, there are no constraints upon it; it is immutable. It is eternal, absolute and independent of the world. The latter is geared to the world, in relationship with it, affected by it and changes continually. It is within the realm of this latter that God receives our responses and participates in the joys and anguish of the created order.

On the basis of the above, I think everyone would agree that the affirmation of God as love by Whitehead and other process theologians has its own special features.

In Christology:

Perhaps it is in terms of its Christology that some Chinese Christians would raise questions with process theology. But we will discover that cosmic love can accommodate rather than exclude a cosmic Christ, and that it can also accommodate ideas about Christ as Savior.

Process theology recognizes that Christ reveals God, and it emphasizes that this revelation does not negate other truths, but rather gives them depth.

Pittenger says, "God's doing is defined by but not confined to the event we name Jesus Christ." He opposes anyone within Christianity calling the Incarnation and entry of Jesus Christ into the world a divine "rescue-operation," which makes it appear that except for Christ's Incarnation, God has not been in the world and is tantamount to saying that his sudden arrival brought God to a place where he had not been before. He further says, "For myself I believe that the finality of Christ is nothing other than his decisive disclosure that God is suffering, saving and ecstatic love. Surely you cannot get anything more final than that. But there may be many approaches to this, many different intimations, adumbrations and preparations."

He says, "Christology is not something exclusive. There is no Christocentrism in the Whiteheadian vision of God when that word is used to make the event of Jesus Christ the only clue to deity and therefore to see him as an anomaly in the God-world relationship. Jesus must be taken as a classical instance, the defining moment if you will, in that wider relationship, not as the absolutely unique and unparalleled moment, without prior intimations and therefore appearing as a bolt from the blue, unrelated to what has gone on before him and what has happened after him."

As for the way people see, explore and know what is prior to the Incarnation and outside it, and their response to God's action and existence, the Incarnation is not a negation of all this, but, to use William Temple's words, offers a "correction and coronation." It is only Christ who can correct and complete the relationship between God and the rest of revealed existence and bring it to its pinnacle.

On the mission of humanity:

Whitehead believed that the human mission or a man's or woman's "true destiny" lay in being a "co-creator in the universe," "partakers in the creative process."

People are all "lovers-in-the-making," "created and hence limited and finite and certainly defective, yet on the way (if we are willing to have it so) towards sharing in the cosmic loving which is nothing other than God himself - whose 'nature and name' (as Wesley's great hymn says) is Love." (Pittenger)

Heidegger felt that the solitariness of every person was his or her ultimate reality, that solitariness was the one and only way he or she could attain self-realization. Whitehead did not agree with this view, believing that our primary existence is within the human collectivity, and that it is there that we attain a relative independence. Participation and individuality are not mutual opposites but are complementary. The more we participate together with others in the life of the collectivity, the more our individuality or personality develops, the more we can enrich the collectivity.

As co-creators with God, the work of our hands is not without significance. The following passage from Pittenger is worthy of consideration:

"All our labor for human liberation and all that these efforts and that labor may achieve, are surely safe in God. The divine reality who is the primal creative agency is also the final receptive reality. God treasures the good that is done in the world; he can and does use it for further implementation of good, as he continues the ceaseless divine striving to bring out of the sometimes almost intractable material of a created order, a harmony in which significant and necessary contrast need not bring about senseless and destructive conflict. To serve toward that end, and not to ask for any recompense 'save the knowledge that we do God's will' (as Ignatius Loyola phrased it) is enough for any truly dedicated Christian disciple."

He believes that evil lies in obstructing progress and rejecting cooperation in the social cosmos. It is an egocentrism which accepts the status quo, a deliberate resistance to the choice of the good. Whitehead said, "The conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe."

Whitehead, in speaking of primitive religion, pointed out, "one studies the will of God in order to preserve oneself," while in a highly developed religion, "one studies his goodness in order to be like him."

Pittenger: "Human memory is very partial. It is accompanied by a forgetfulness in which much that was valued is lost.... But God's memory is everlasting and unfailing. The divine knowledge is inclusive of all actuality which has been achieved in the creation. Nothing is forgotten, nothing is cast as rubbish to the void - save evil, which is not so much cast aside as transmuted into potentiality for some other achievement of good." He quotes a poem from Richard Hovey, an early twentieth century American poet:

God has said, Ye shall fail and perish:
But the thrill you have felt tonight
I shall keep in my heart and cherish
When the worlds have passed out of sight.

Pittenger further states, "All that has been good, noble and of value in our lives is taken after death by God into his eternal present - he 'remembers' us."

Whitehead spoke of human beings as "partakers of the creative process" who can find their "true destiny" only in seeing themselves as "co-creators in the universe."

The above has been an elementary introduction to process theology, from which I hope you can make out the contours and some characteristic features.

Let me say again that to rely only on one's own already-held ideas to critique others, saying how far they have strayed from orthodoxy, is not the primary goal of our theological study. What we should ask is: what questions are they seeking to answer? Have I ever considered these questions? How do the views I hold deal with these same questions? Could I deal with these questions better by considering a greater variety of factors?

There are many theological schools in the world and a number of them are incompatible with our situation. If we study them, it is simply to increase our knowledge; they may not be worth adopting. I feel there are elements in liberation theology, Teilhard de Chardin and process theology which are worthy of consideration. As theological students in China today and as those involved in the work of theological construction, we must be able to distinguish among them, be capable of critical judgment and be able to absorb new things in order to serve the principle of self-propagation.

Some theologies recognize that the material world is in a process of change and they see this change as linked to the sacred love and creation of God. And this gives these schools of theology a common language with those people in the world awaiting or promoting transformation. China is a nation in which change has been extremely fast and extremely great and one in which a great many things are yet awaiting transformation. The people place their hopes on transformation or reform. Undertaking theological construction in such an environment, it will do us good to keep abreast of process theology, liberation theology and the theologies of those such as Teilhard de Chardin. We can gain a great deal of insight from them.

It is a long process from today until the final realization of the human collectivity as it exists in the will of God, and there are many stages in the process. As for the mid-segments, as far as I know, Teilhard and the process theologians have said nothing. In their systems of thought, these are blanks. They are rebels against capitalism and they have seen the coming of the transformation, but as to how change would happen and what would take the place of the present state of affairs, they offer no explanations. Thus, on the one hand, though they

emphasize change and were not welcomed by the vested interests who strive to maintain the status quo, on the other hand, they could not avoid disappointing those demanding transformation. As far as I know, Teilhard stayed at that stage until he died. Some process theologians are already aware of this dilemma and John Cobb's book, "Process Theology and Political Theology," is a breakthrough work in this area.

Liberation theology lays a great deal of stress on praxis. The search for liberation is the present praxis, its specific content is opposition to imperialism and despotism and the bringing about of people's political power. Some are opposed to capitalism and look towards socialism.

We have people who feel that being a Christian means one should not be against anything, which is tantamount to saying that Christians should have no sense of right and wrong, no love and hate. But Paul Tillich once said, "It is a strange work of love to destroy that which is against love."

Speaking of China, we are sympathetic to the three theological schools described above in the quest for transformation, but as far as anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, anti-bureaucrat-capitalism and the mission of liberation to end oppression goes, we are in the postliberation stage, that is, in the next stage of historical development. In this historical stage we cannot and should not take class struggle as the key link any longer.

In this stage of history, we are constructing socialism. For China, socialism is much more capable, as a social system, of embodying love than is capitalism.

Capitalism safeguards individual ownership of the means of production, safeguards oppression, places the fate of the broad working masses into the hands of the capitalists. In third world countries, except for China and a minority of others, it places the people's fate in the hands of the multinationals or their political representatives. To compete with other capitalist groups and preserve themselves, even well-intentioned capitalists move beyond the control of their consciences. As time passes, their consciences become numb.

Due to the burden of history and pressure and obstruction from all sides, socialist construction is an arduous process, but it casts off oppression and moves toward realization of a new principle of distribution, "from each according to his ability; to each according to his work." It enables humankind to achieve a level of equality never seen before. The universalization of love is the goal of socialism. Socialism is love on a large scale, organized love, love which has taken shape as a social system.

Fairness, equality and justice - these are not the antithesis of love, they are its necessary content. We do not practice love only within a tiny area. When we are able to practice love within a much broader area, when we distribute love to the masses in a rational way, then love takes on the form of fairness, equality and justice.

Today, China has not as yet implemented love in a very good, complete way. This is a vast undertaking, but socialism as a social system offers a guarantee for its realization.

This undertaking is worthy of Christians' efforts. Love is not something just to be enjoyed by two persons, you and me. Love means we have the same orientation, look toward the future together and step forward together. It is this kind of love which is adequate to enable people to be mutually encouraged, mutually spurred on, mutually supportive, and together become co-partakers in God's creative process.

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translated by Janice Wickeri

7. The Lord Has Done Another Great Thing For Us (on the publication of the simplified character Bible) – Shen Cheng'en

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." John 1:1-3.

We thank God that after two years of hard work, the pocket-size "New Testament and Psalms" in a simplified character, horizontally printed version is available. This is another great thing which God has done for our Chinese church.

In 1979, with the resumption of normal activities, the most serious problem faced by local churches was a lack of Bibles. Thus in February, 1980, a resolution was passed at the meeting of the standing committee of the Third National Christian Conference in Shanghai that the Bible be reprinted as quickly as possible. At that time, speed was of the essence and photocopying was the only way to achieve the necessary speed. If the decision had been to publish a simplified-character version, then on the basis of recent experience, it would have taken two years to accomplish, and it would have been 1982 before the first Bibles were ready. Using this method, however, one simply makes a photographic plate from the copy and begins printing. The previous version used traditional complicated characters and of course the new copies were the same. When the first and second printings came off the presses, some observant Christians very responsibly wrote us saying there were printing errors in the new Bibles. Actually these errors had already been present in the old Bibles. Of course, by the third printing we had already asked the printer to help us correct them. If further errors appeared, these too could be corrected. This illustrates the fact that, with this method, the new edition will be just like the old. But we were spared typesetting and proof-reading; activities which require a great deal of time and effort. Our first batch of Bibles was published in October, 1980. This was just when the Third National Christian Conference was being held, and each delegate at the conference was presented with one of the newly-reprinted Bibles. How joyful and thankful they were to receive them! The decision to use the copying process to reprint the first few batches of Bibles was thus shown to be entirely correct.

However, a rumor spread overseas: Why did the Chinese church reprint the Bible in the traditional characters? It must be because they don't want the young people to be able to read it. Of course such a rumor had not the slightest effect upon our work, but it could be confusing to those not aware of the true situation. When news of our reprinting of the Bible was announced, some foreign Christians traveling in China made a special point of asking leading church officials: Is it true that there is no Book of Daniel or of Revelation in the Bibles printed by the Chinese church? Although the printing was not yet completed, we happened to have in hand a specimen sent by the printer (to help us get an idea of the finished product, not for proof-reading purposes), and we showed this to our guests. The rumors fell apart in the face of the facts.

Since our new printing of the Bible, we had also received some complaints from many young Christians. They said it was difficult for them to read the complicated characters, a simplified version should be published. Once the situation had been explained to them, however, they were willing to be patient.

By 1984, several batches of the reprinted Bibles had appeared and the urgency of the demand for them had eased somewhat. The two national Christian organizations placed the possibility of publishing a simplified-character version of the Bible on their agendas. In April of that year, with the support of the Shanghai churches, a group of twenty retirees, Christians of long standing, with experience in publishing or in language teaching, were gathered from among the churches in Shanghai to assist in this holy task. They had to be retired to ensure that they had the time to give to the task. They had to be Christians of long standing to ensure that they had the necessary familiarity with the Bible. It was also necessary that they have experience in publishing or in language teaching; the reason for this is self-evident. The task for these brothers and sisters was to copy out by hand the entire Bible and in the process mark out the verses (the old edition was divided into chapters but not verses), change traditional characters to simplified, and modernize the punctuation. In order to have a version printed in a horizontal format, they naturally had to do this in their copy.

In May, the twenty met together for the first time to discuss the work ahead, and the tremendous task was underway. Division into verses was fairly simple. After discussion it was decided to accomplish this on a copy of the old edition. Simplified characters presented no great problem either and could be readily solved with recourse to the dictionary or simplification chart. The difficulty lay in punctuation, because if punctuation marks were inaccurately used, the original meaning of the text could be distorted. For example, how long is the first section of Jesus' reply to Nicodemus in John 3? Putting Jesus' speech in quotation marks, if we open quotes in v.5, where should we close? In the old edition there were no quotation marks, so no one had any problem with it. In adding them, one must distinguish between the author (John) quoting Jesus (quotation marks should be added here) and the author's own words. Some versions today close Jesus' own speech in v.15, but there are others which close in v.21. This latter method makes v.16-21, which is John's own perception, into a quote of Jesus. In such situations, one must compare with the original and refer to other editions (including foreign-language ones). Although none of the twenty knew any of the Biblical languages, they were all quite proficient in English. At present, the English-language Revised Standard Version (RSV) is one of the better translations of the Bible. This English Bible became their primary reference work. Where it was necessary to consult the original languages, help was sought from Old and New Testament professors at Nanjing Theological Seminary.

At a working conference in July, 1984, the two national Christian organizations decided to set up a committee to guide the sacred work of the publication of the horizontal format, simplified character version of the Bible, and after preliminary discussions, 21 persons were appointed to the committee. In August, taking advantage of a meeting of the Enlarged Standing Committee of the two organizations in Beijing, the Rev. Qi Qingcai was recommended as chairman with Rev. Shen Cheng'en as secretary. The conference heard a

report of the work on this task since April along with problems which had arisen in the day to day work and conscientious discussion was undertaken and a number of decisions made.

Following the decision of the committee, we have first published a New Testament and Psalms. A complete Old and New Testament Bible will follow. The New Testament and Psalms is already available and the newly copied out O.T. portion is now being proofed by several professors of Bible at Nanjing Theological Seminary.

Proof-reading is a tremendous and time-consuming task. Once the hand-copying of the Bible is finished, it must be proofed immediately. When the manuscript is sent to the printer, it is typeset. Following this it must be proofed, once, twice, three times, until there are no wrong characters, no mistaken punctuation. The number of proof-readers is rather small, just four, because too many can easily give rise to stylistic differences.

During these two years, we have felt deeply the Lord's presence. He is with us. And we have also felt most deeply the care and support for this holy work of many brothers and sisters throughout the country. They encouraged us with their letters and supported us with their prayers. Quite a few foreign friends, hearing we were engaged in this task, also expressed praise and concern. We want to specially thank Nanjing Theological Seminary. The professors there have extremely busy teaching schedules, yet the Seminary found several to help in proof-reading the entire manuscript.

We have given our utmost, yet there remain things we have overlooked, and there are inadequacies and errors. We sincerely hope that upon receiving a copy of this horizontal format, simplified-character Bible, our brothers and sisters will inform us of any faults as soon as possible. Thank you.

Tian Feng, No. 8, 1986, p. S.
translated by Janice Wickeri

8. Dr. T.C. Chao's Last Letter to Me – Luo Zhenfang

Though the work of Nanjing Theological Seminary was temporarily stopped during the ten years of chaos of the Cultural Revolution, in 1979 the Center for Religious Studies was established at Nanjing University. One of the important tasks then was the revision of the Chinese Union Version of the New Testament. At the same time, the training of a small number of graduate students was undertaken. Religious research work which had been halted for more than ten years was also resurrected. With a joyful heart I wrote a letter to my teacher, Dr. T.C. Chao, reporting this new beginning of ours. He wrote me a happy letter back, but some three months later, was taken to the Lord. It had never occurred to me that this might happen so soon. Now I am publishing this last letter of his. In it we can see what his thoughts were during his last days on earth.

26 July 1979

My dear Zhenfang,

I was very happy to receive your letter. I am 92 years old already and extremely weak. I cannot do anything. The merger of you and your colleagues with Nanjing University is an important event. Don't look back, nor take the old road.

For three years now I have not left my house, as I can only walk 500 paces a day. But since the death of my wife last September, I have been reading the Old and New Testaments. The New I have already finished and am as far as the Book of Joshua in the Old. I want to see the historical development of religion, to see if the boundless universe is under the governance of God or is simply a natural process.

Some say I can live to 100. I, however, am not so attached to the idea. The longer I go on, the more I have to stop - stop or slow down. I cannot even write poetry any more. Some days ago, I wrote a *hishi* (an eight-line poem with 5-7 characters in each line, with a strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme.):

The Gang of Four has been locked up,
And a fresh Long March gives out a wonderful light.
To establish the country we need stability as one,
Dedicating ourselves, unyielding, to modernization.
Heaven and earth have now changed.
A dynamic universe thrives.
Make revolution in spite of difficulties,
For the business of revolution has just begun.

T.C. Chao

The first thing we see from this letter is that he is a patriot. When he heard that we were to work at Nanjing University, he urged us not to turn back. Through the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, Chinese Christians became one with the Chinese people. Our research work was highly thought of by the people of our country as they felt it would contribute to the national

"four modernizations." When the Religious Studies Center was begun at Nanjing University, we had not then thought that there was the possibility of reinstituting theological education to train church personnel. Like ourselves at that time, Dr. Chao was limited in his thinking on this. We had not yet realized God's wonderful plan for the Chinese church; as the Bible says, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived" (ICor. 2:9).

I was in contact with Dr. Chao for close to forty years. I had sure knowledge of his faith and behavior. He was ever a seeker after truth. Just as the apostle Paul said, "Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal..." (Phil. 3:13). In the past Dr. Chao was possessed of a rather liberal cast of mind. He had been imprisoned in Beijing at the start of the Japanese-American war in the Pacific and his faith deepened and he drew closer to neo-orthodoxy during this time. Another factor which influenced him was joining the Anglican Church and officiating at communion regularly. During those days, he would frequently comment, "Life is a sacrament." One of his traits was that he was extremely sensitive. Following liberation, his thinking came under attack from two fronts: one was Marxism-Leninism, the other the ultra-left line which continued for a rather long time within the Communist Party. This latter, in particular, made him an object of attack. It should be noted here that not every church leader was attacked under the ultra-left line, but that the scope of such an attack was greater and Dr. Chao was a key figure attacked in this way. Though this was the case, he was never branded a rightist or a counter-revolutionary. He was persecuted by the ultra-leftist Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution. With their overthrow, Dr. Chao, along with all others persecuted in this way, was rehabilitated. As his memorial stated, "The calumnies on Dr. Chao's character collapsed of their own weight long ago." Just when we were awaiting his contribution to the socialist four modernizations, he unfortunately passed away. The memorial said, "This is a loss to Christian circles in China. Since we, as Mr. Chao's pupils, have learned much from our long association with him, even more, we have lost a teacher and an elder."

During the "ten years of chaos" the Chinese Protestant church "passed through the valley of the shadow of death." In those days, there was "darkness and not light," "gloom with no brightness in it" (Amos 5:20). We groped in the dark and our faith met with serious challenges. For some, the old faith was thoroughly destroyed, nearly to the point where there was not left "one stone upon another" (Mt. 24:2). But this was not the final verdict. "The genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire..." (1 Pet. 1:7). Dr. Chao, ever a seeker after truth, began to seek anew the light of the Bible following the death of Mrs. Chao. All her life, Mrs. Chao watched over him in every way. She was only a poorly-educated housewife and the two were poles apart in this regard. But all his life, Dr. Chao was faithful to this wife who was so very ill-suited to him. This fact alone is enough to make me admire him greatly. We do indeed see Christ-like qualities in him. His virtuous wife departed this life when Dr. Chao was 91 years old. It seems that after this, there was only one thing most precious to him in all the world - the word of God, the Bible.

His letter says that his object in reading the Bible was "to see the historical development of religion, to see if this boundless universe is under God's governance or is simply a natural

process." The famous theologian Barth did not recognize God's revelation in the natural world, seeing only the special revelation of God in the Bible. Such an understanding is unavoidably biased, but truly, it is only through the Bible that we know God's actions. In seeking knowledge of God's governance, Dr. Chao turned not to philosophy, but to the Bible. This was because he knew that only the word of the Lord is the lamp which lights the road before us.

Some people exaggerate saying that in his later years, Dr. Chao set aside his faith. Can we so simply determine whether he believed or not? If we take this or that doctrine as a standard by which to judge, then perhaps we can say he did not believe. But if we do this, we are oversimplifying an extremely complex question. As for Chao, who was a theologian, we cannot categorically state that he "did not believe." I feel rather, that in the broader sense, we can say that he did believe. In his vision, John saw countless people standing before the throne and the Lamb, clothed in white and holding palm branches. The number of those who will be saved far surpasses our imagination. We can in no way place limits on the saving will of our omnipotent God because of any narrowness of mind on our part. Dr. Chao was an explorer on the road of faith, he would seek greater light. In our spiritual lives, when our old equilibrium is destroyed by an outside challenge, we seek a new one. This is a familiar experience and in this way our knowledge of the truth is advanced a step. On his new road of seeking, before he could reach his goal, Chao parted from this world. Because of this his search for the truth is an "unfinished symphony." But what does it matter? It is still a masterpiece passed on to those who would continue the work of composition.

Dr. T.C. Chao will ever be my most respected teacher, a tireless seeker after the truth.

Nanjing Theological Review, December, 1985, p. 34.
translated by Janice Wickeri

9. On the Appreciation of Christian Art – He Qi

(1) The Goals of Appreciation are Learning and Love.

Artistic creation arises from humanity's need for emotional expression. Through art appreciation, a person can share in these expressions. God's highest revelation to human emotion is love. Christianity is an emotion-filled, love-filled religion and the purpose of its art is the revelation, praise and exaltation of this limitless love, that the world and human life may be filled with it. Without love, there would be no Christian art. A heart lacking in love has no way to apprehend the beauty of artistic creation. Works of art which are beyond people's abilities or knowledge to appreciate often meet with rejection. Whatever the reasons might be, we should first of all seriously ask ourselves: do we ourselves lack sympathy and understanding for others? Do we lack love?

The beauty which abounds in the heart of a Christian is not a simple matter of dogmatic ethics, it must also be tempered by rich artistic beauty. When we enter a church, the exquisite melody of a hymn can suffuse the depths of our souls with pure and exalted emotion. The American writer O. Henry in his short story "The Rod and the Hymn," describes the case of a delinquent youth. The rod has failed to change him, but when he hears a superb hymn coming from a church, his soul is truly moved and the warmth and love which fills the music awakens the humanity within him.

The appreciation of art can be compared to the cultivation of flowering houseplants. Flowers can only be looked at, not eaten, yet when we give ourselves over to caring for them, they can exert a salubrious influence on the soul and nurture beautiful sentiments within us. When you enjoy the flowers' beauty, can you help but feel the beauty of all God's creation? Should not human destiny and human life be as beautiful as these flowers? We must weed and water regularly to maintain the flowers' beauty. Should we not, then, do the same for our own nation, people, church and life? The sixteenth century Spaniard Leone wrote a book called "Dialogue of Love," in which he speaks of the concept of 'filografia' which sees beauty, "when it makes the soul happy, as moving it closer to love; moving it from the knowledge of inferior beauty to the knowledge of superior beauty, that is, knowledge of the beauty of the soul." This is the significance of art appreciation; doing without doing; gain without direct material gain.

I do not agree with the popular wisdom which says, "Some like turnips and some like cabbage; there's no accounting for taste," for habits of taste can be differentiated into the vulgar and the refined. And, as far as that goes, one may prefer turnips, but there is no need to be limited to them. If one eats only turnips and no cabbage, one will not get enough nourishment. Please do not become enmeshed in a web of your own spinning, open your hearts, open your arms, and share in even more beauty through the boundless world of art. Embrace much more love!

(2) The Finite and the Infinite

We humans are finite creatures, only God is infinite, the source of truth, goodness and beauty. The English neo-platonist philosopher, Shaftesbury (1671-1713), posited three levels of beauty: 1. form, 2. soul, 3. God. Of these three levels, the soul approaches God most closely because the soul is more dynamic than the flesh and the spirit freer than matter. Though the life of the body is a transient, finite one, the soul's knowledge of the great love of God is immeasurable. "Art is beauty produced of the soul and reborn." (Hegel) Therefore beauty is the bridge between the human soul and God.

But we should also realize that of the forms of beauty which humankind has created during each stage of the long slow-moving river of history, none has been or can be absolutely perfect. In comparison with the perfection, boundlessness and eternity of God, their position will always be relative, finite. In terms of its forms, such as sound, color or appearance, the beauty of a work of art will always be limited. The artist pursues perfection, but will never achieve it in a work of art. But for this very reason he or she must pursue it relentlessly for his or her entire life. The painter Qi Baishi who lived nearly a hundred years deplored the fact that he "could not be reincarnated" to continue the pursuit. In pursuit of this perfection, Picasso passed through a "blue period," a "rose period," a "Negro period," a "cubist period," and a "neo-classic period." In appreciating art, we must sense in its limited forms the limitless beauty, the unlimited love, of God. In its relativeness, see perfection, in its limits, the infinite. The sensitive soul will apprehend something. When a work of art can bring to our souls such wonderful revelation, we should respond with joy, not reject it after a quick look. The bridge-building role of art lies in conducting people's souls across to the opposite shore of infinite beauty, but the bridge itself is not the goal. Those who condemn the bridge, who require the infinite, the absolute and unsullied perfection from it, are forgetting their own goal - to reach the other shore.

(3) The Correct Attitude - an Appropriate Psychological Distance

The first step in appreciation of art is to have the correct attitude. Traditional Chinese thinking stressed the concept of the mean, neither too close nor too far a distance between perceiver and perceived, but a sense of relative balance between the two. After its journey through the duality of spirit and matter, Western philosophy entered upon the penetrating insight of compound subjectivity. The early twentieth century English psychologist Bullough posed his famous concept of psychological distance: to correctly appreciate art one must open up an appropriate psychological distance between the object and the self, a distance neither too small nor too large. There is a formal link in terms of inherent structure between this concept of experimental psychology and the goal of traditional Zen painting and disputation: "The best part lies between resemblance and non-resemblance; between form and not-form." If the self stands in too close, too intimate a relationship with the object, pragmatic impulses press on the aesthetic sense, making it almost impossible to discern various shades of difference within the whole.

A line of ancient Chinese poetry says that the poet has only himself to blame for missing the true beauty of the mountain, because he is on, not outside, the mountain. This is like the

blind men touching the elephant, each one comes into contact only with the part nearest himself and there is no way to make a holistic aesthetic assessment. On the other hand, appreciation cannot take place if the distance is too great either. One cannot maintain an overly pedantic sober-mindedness before a work of art. Apathetic and moody, unfeeling people are not qualified to create or appreciate art.

Appreciation is also difficult without minimal knowledge of some art forms, content and circumstances surrounding the creation of a work of art. The goal of such understanding is precisely to lessen the distance. Therefore we must not hastily reject art of different periods, nations or styles which defy immediate understanding. Rather we should make the effort to raise our own knowledge and become more cultivated, and with hearts full of love try to familiarize ourselves with, understand and respect the emotions of others. We must learn to be happy with those who are happy; joyful with those who are joyful, thus greatly enriching our souls with love.

(4) Art Appreciation is not Idolatry

When artistic creation becomes idolatry, this is the result of too close a psychological distance. We find this lesson in the history of Christianity. In the Middle Ages, the Byzantine defenders of the veneration of images believed, according to the tenets of neoplatonism, in a mystical commonality among the material image, their ancestors (the saints) and the creator of all things - God. In the early eighth century, this idolatry reached its apotheosis at Byzantium, but in its wake arose an iconoclastic movement centered at Constantinople, in which the destruction of idols reached a peak over the next hundred years. A literal and one-sided understanding of the ten commandments was used to oppose idol worship. Emperor Leo III, the Isaurian, issued an edict in 730 AD ordering that all sacred images of any human resemblance be destroyed. In the time of his son Constantine V (reigned 741-775) the destruction of any statue other than the image of Christ on the cross was undertaken in even greater earnest. The struggle between image worshippers and iconoclasts continues even today. I feel that both have gone to extremes: to use art to create idols for worship is in reality using finite forms to restrict the infinite God. The role of art lies in illumining and exalting human emotion, knowing the infinite love of God through the finite beauty of artistic form, not merely allowing one to pay homage at a statue's feet. We cannot allow the bridge to become the other shore, cannot allow the means to become the end. Yet, how sad it would be to forbid appreciation of all fine art in order to oppose idolatry! We should not after all stop eating for fear of choking nor throw the baby out with the bath water. Art builds up the bridge of communication between the human soul and God. Can we be hardhearted enough to destroy this bridge? Rather, we rejoice in many more people reaching the Father by this bridge, and we are willing to build even more such bridges for the people of this earth.

(5) On the Dispute Caused by a Painting

The Chinese church on its three-self path is certainly not a closed system. It is happy to share in the artistic riches of other peoples and places, and it frequently introduces outstanding Christian art of all times and places to Chinese Christians. When the painting

"Baptism of Christ" by Verrocchio appeared in the No. 2, 1985 issue of Tian Feng, readers sent letters taking issue with the representation in the painting, saying that in the gospels of Matthew and Mark, it is written that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, but in this painting Jesus was standing at the edge of the river as he was being baptized. This, they felt, went against what was written in the Bible. They rejected the picture outright and severely criticized the editor. I am not much in favor of text criticism as an approach to appreciating art, much less to undertake to judge a human creation from the Renaissance on the literal basis of the Chinese translation of the Bible. This does not seem to be a very comprehensive approach. If one really wishes to apply textual criticism, one must undertake a more detailed reading of other Biblical translations: English, Latin, Greek ... (and including the Dead Sea Scrolls). As for Christ being "in the water", none of the records of his baptism says clearly to what level on Jesus' person the water rose in feet and inches. Then when we see in the painting that both Jesus' feet are in the water we cannot deny that Christ must be regarded as standing "in the water." If we look even more closely at the painting we discover that the artist has painted the important events beginning in Matthew 3:16, "And when Jesus was baptized, he went immediately up from the water..." The painting does not depict the fleeting moment of the present continuous tense but the past tense.

Da Vinci's "Last Supper" is also in the past tense. It should be noted that the fifteenth century Florentine school of Italian painters were extremely strict and conscientious in their depiction of sacred subjects, but they were subject to the limitations imposed by the contemporary extent of the development of painting technique. Though they were highly skilled in anatomy, perspective and like realistic skills, their ability to portray things in a very vivid and lifelike manner was limited. Looked at with modern eyes they are little short of wooden. But we need to understand the process of human cultural evolution. In the lower left-hand corner of "Baptism of Christ", we also see two angels painted by Verrocchio's student, da Vinci. These are an epochal life-like work - their gentleness, beauty, purity and goodness give expression to God's love for humanity and foretell the advent of the Renaissance. As we said above, one should not make hasty judgments towards art; negative judgments especially should not be passed lightly. One must make the effort to raise one's own level of cultivation in this area and alter one's psychological distance to an appropriate level. We humans are an open system and we must absorb a great deal of moisture from the vast arena of world art if our own growth is not to be stunted.

(6) Emotional Authenticity More Important than Fact.

Artistic creation and art appreciation are not equivalent to criticism. Criticism requires sober-minded research, analysis and reasoning. But what artistic creation and appreciation require are much more passion and fantasy, what the German psychologist Theodore Lipps called "Einfühlung," or empathy. Chinese painting values emotional affinity above resemblance of shape and line. Works emphasizing 'form' can at most be called "fine works of art" while those of emotional affinity may be called masterpieces. In the terms used to speak of Chinese painting, these have 'rhythm,' they have 'captured the essence.' In imitating creation (nature) even more emphasis is placed on 'capturing the essence,' - emphasizing the innermost feelings. Taoist artists painted the lotus flower in the medium of ink. A few strokes of the brush; a few blobs of ink: these were not entirely the same as the blossoms and

leaves of the real thing, but the essence of the lotus, that spirit of rising up through the mud without being affected by it, is captured through the true feelings of the artist's soul. No one can criticize these lotus flowers as inauthentic. An ancient Chinese poem says: "The painted boat listens to the rain." Who would have thought a boat could hear the rain? - but can we say the poem is inauthentic? The 19th century French Romantic painter Eugene Delacroix's painting "Liberty Leading the People" was inspired by the Revolution of 1830. Raising the tricolor in this painting is no ordinary flag-bearer, but Liberty, the goddess of the ancient Greeks. We can feel the authenticity of the artist's intense emotion here. In the "Four Apostles" by the German Renaissance painter Albrecht Durer, the apostles John and Paul are holding printed Bibles, but paper-making had not been developed in the time of the apostles! (In China, bamboo slips were used, in India shells, in Egypt papyrus and in the Middle East goat skin). But remember that the artist, Durer, was a close friend of Martin Luther and supported his friend's direct translation of the Bible as a weapon and clarion in the Reformation. Can we then call this inauthentic?

The sixteenth century English poet Sir Philip Sidney wrote: "the natural world is copper; the poet renders it gold." The genuineness of art which is processed through the artist's soul is the truth which draws nearest to God. Because of this the truth of art is of a higher order than natural truth.

World Christian art has long surpassed the days of Gregory the First when it functioned primarily as Bible illustrations. People's love for Christian art is not limited to Biblical illustrations, but through the soul feels that expression of God's highest revelation - authentic love.

(7) On the Indigenization of Christian Art

In modern Christian art Jesus' face has been depicted with the characteristics of many nations. We have the Black Madonna and child, the Indian Christ, Chinese angels... Many good people find this difficult to understand. In fact if we merely see Jesus as an historical figure of two thousand years ago - "the Palestinian Jew" - we overlook Jesus' spiritual nature while emphasizing the single aspect of his humanity, again attempting to encompass the infinite with the finite. The Bible has demonstrated Jesus' universality, showing us that the incarnation can surpass the Jewishness of Christ to become the second person of the indivisible trinity for all creation, working in the hearts of humanity, omnipresent, surpassing four-dimensional space. In every corner of the earth, more and more people feel in their souls the Lord's presence, that he is with them. Because of this Christ Jesus' face appears in the art of many more nations. This makes us happy because it also means that more nations know Christ and have felt that Christ is among them.

In paintings of the angels announcing the good news by Catholic peasant farmers in Dominica, Mary has become a woman of the people of Dominica, there is a sewing machine in her house, the Roman soldiers are wearing modern helmets and carrying carbines. These paintings vividly express the spirit of the present struggles of the peoples of Latin America encouraged by liberation theology. Based on the true spirit of the gospels, it can inspire and reinforce the progressive cause of all humankind. Under the guidance of the gospel, art gives

expression to the genuine aspirations of a people. How can we refuse to understand or lightly reject this beautiful message?

Christianity and Buddhism have come to China from outside. But from the Eastern Han, Wei and Jin on, Buddhism gradually merged with Chinese culture. This was due to the fact that the native Lao-Zhuang philosophies and the Xuan sect of the Wei and Jin dynasties were quite in harmony with Mahayana Buddhism. Thus, there was in the Han culture of the central Chinese plain an innate receptivity to Indian Buddhism. Since the latter Tang, Zen (or Chan) Buddhist art moved even further toward shaping an indigenous Chinese Buddhist art, and this became an organic component of Chinese culture. As for Christianity, it had been introduced into China as early as the Tang dynasty, but it was never able to find a foothold in the soil of the Chinese cultural milieu. A receptivity to Christianity, except for strains containing certain magical elements (such as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom), did not exist, though from the Opium War onward, there were attempts at forced entry. In spite of the fact that there had been proposals a century earlier that in order to spread the gospel in China, it was necessary to realize three self, yet in that era when the Chinese people were not yet masters of their own fate, there was no way to realize this dream. In 1949 with the birth of New China, the Chinese churches following a three self path were deeply concerned with this, and called for evangelization in China to respect the special character of the indigenous cultural milieu, and, even more, to emphasize the special features of Chinese culture and to respect the traditional sentiments of the people.

The world has entered a cosmic era and the people's search for beauty has also broadened. People's aesthetic sense has begun to enter upon a multidimensional period. In art, the people desire change, not stasis; they want variety, not uniformity. Each country and each people should have its own artistic style and distinctive features. The more indigenous art is, the more international it will be; the more unique it is, the more multifarious it will be. Imagine for a moment how monotonous the world would be if we Chinese could not offer our four thousand years of unique Chinese culture, if we did not have those symbols of the Chinese nation - the great wall, Tiananmen, West Lake - if every nation on earth lost its uniqueness and we were left with the domes of ancient Rome! How absurd it would be if travelers went to West Lake simply to find skyscrapers, or to Huang Shan to see the Alps! Advanced technology can be uniformly applied throughout the world, but art cannot follow this pattern. An artistic style which was the same the world over would be a total disaster for art itself.

This is true for the ecumenical church as well. A solitary flower is not spring; spring is spring because there is a riot of flowers. The churches of different peoples bring their own special gifts to the ecumenical church, and how greatly is that church enriched thereby! Since God has created all different races, he assuredly takes pleasure in the divers artistic styles in which they express their praise of him and join together to participate in this excellent process of creation. It is precisely because there are no limits to God's creativity and love that the forms in which this limitlessness is praised can also be infinite.

In recent years, our Nanjing Seminary art classes, professors, students and many sympathetic and enthusiastic friends in the art world, with the concern and support of Bishop K.H. Ting and the entire Seminary body, have been exploring and experimenting in the task

of the indigenization of Chinese Christian art. A number of ink wash paintings, papercuts, woodcuts and other works in various folk styles have been produced. We hope that our work will add something to the richness of the ecumenical church, and for this we are willing to work and search tirelessly.

Nanjing Theological Seminary, January, 1986
translated by Janice Wickeri

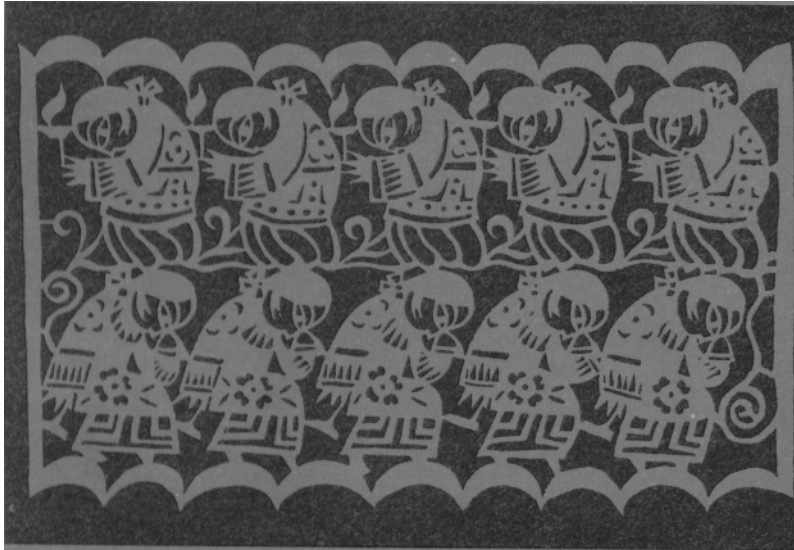
10. Artwork

*Christmas (paper cut), by He Qi, male, age 36;
member, Chinese Artists' Association, teacher,
Nanjing Theological Seminary art department.*



The Good Samaritan (paper cut), by He Qi.

Ten Virgins (paper cut), by He Qi.

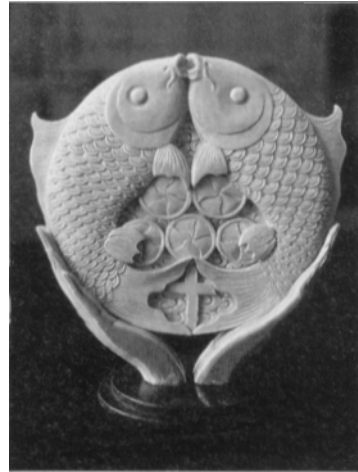


The Flight into Egypt (paper cut, by He Qi.

Your Descendants Will Be as the Dew (ink and wash), by Chai Haili, male, age 47; member, Jiangsu Artists' Association, teacher, Nanjing Engineering Institute.



Five Loaves and Two Fishes (wood carving), by Zhang Wanlong, male, age 36; Nanjing Theological Seminary art department; formerly designer and factory manager with the Zhejiang Dongyang Industrial Arts Company.



Christmas Eve (ink and wash), by), 47 Artists Association, Jiangsu Art Publishing House.

At the Well (water color), by Zhang Guijie, female, age 25; student, Nanjing Theological Seminary.



Genesis (oils), h v Tang Guo, male, age 32; editor, Jiangsu Provincial Writers' Association.

11. In Search of the Dove – Cheng Naishan

Quite fortuitously, my literary career and my religious faith began at nearly the same time six years ago. Most people would term a coincidence such as this "chance" or "luck" but I have always felt that numerous "chance" occurrences are like a sculptor's knife, carving out our various destinies.

Faith is not inborn, it is acquired. When the soul experiences a kind of thirst and need, nothing can obstruct the power of faith. In times past or present, whether in China or abroad, countless numbers of people of ideals and integrity who have devoted their lives to the faith have been recorded. I am a Christian, but I honestly believe that any faith, so long as it not be base or nonsensical, should be commended, because it is only thinking people who are capable of faith. Faith is thought raised to a higher level.

One Sunday in 1979, I "chanced" to pass by Mu'en Church (in Shanghai). Snatches of a hymn came to my ears. I was attracted by it in spite of myself and I entered the packed church. All sorts of feelings welled up in my heart, and I did nothing to stop them, for who could have foretold that after the ten years of turmoil, one would be able to hear religious music here? "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty,..." The hymn shook me to the core. I believe that this was God, calling to me. From then on, I went often to the church. I discovered that, in addition to the sermon, I went to breathe in that atmosphere, that peace and tranquility, that air of love.

When the dove released by Noah returned with the newly budded olive branch in its beak, it bore in its body all the hopes of humanity for peace and every good thing. And humanity began calling to it; in music, in words, in colors ... thus, we have had our Picasso, our Haydn and Mozart, as well as Rousseau, Hugo and Tolstoy.

Even though my pen is immature and clumsy, I love the life in which I use it. I love this land which has given me life, nurtured me and been the source of my inspiration - my homeland. I love those around me. Love must be given substance, whether that be the Lord we cannot see or the life we do. We must love them both ardently. If a person loves not even the mother and homeland which bore and nurtured her, love for the formless God would be inconceivable. Only by loving can one understand, discover and become aware.

I have found that there is so much food for thought around me, so many things to mull over. My stories, "The Year I Turned Forty," "The Story of the Goddess of Joy" and "The Yellow Ribbon" are the result. Through these, I have been calling in my weak voice to that dove. At the same time, I was laying the cornerstone of my literary career.

Many readers, on finding out that I am a Christian ask, out of the best of intentions, "Isn't there a contradiction between faith and creativity?" I have never said anything against my convictions or spoken insincerely, but no matter how many times I have denied it, they still do not seem to believe me. It seems that a few words cannot convince them. But I still must speak truthfully: there is no contradiction between faith and creativity. I look at life around

me entirely through ordinary eyes and write what life reveals to me on all aspects of society, the joys and sorrows of this mortal world. But because I belong to the Lord, I also have a particular angle from which I observe and understand life and this is assuredly reflected in my writing. Many critics have long been aware of this. But this has in no way affected my reputation or success. In 1985 alone, I was awarded the inaugural Shanghai Literary Prize and the Dunhuang Grand Prize in Literature.

In another respect, I would never insist upon squeezing a lot of religious vocabulary into my work simply because I am a Christian, as if without this I could not show that I was a writer and a believer. My young friends with some knowledge of literature all know that if a writer does try too hard to use the pen to parade her own point of view, that writer will be a failed writer, a foolish writer. A mature Christian need not necessarily fill his or her speech with a lot of Biblical quotations; his actions will everywhere attest to his faith and worldview. When we read Hugo's "Les Miserables" or Tolstoy's "War and Peace," there may be few actual mentions of God, yet we see in them the traces and image of the merciful, omnipotent, infinite God. Music is the best example. It has no concrete form, but as in Haydn and Beethoven, we are allowed to "see" our God through formless music.

When I take up my pen, I often have a sense of that dove brushing my temple as it flies past. I want to call out to it, because we humans need it! To get it to return, we must clean up this earth on which we depend for life, lift it up and make ourselves, this humanity, a bit more perfect. How can we achieve perfection? Only through self-reliance, by exerting ourselves, through tolerance, understanding, hard work and self-improvement. My stories, "The Blue Room," "Poverty Street," "Bible for Daughters" and "Great Men" reflect my discovery that seemingly ordinary lives contain such riches that one cannot exhaust them in writing. Each day brings new revelation, new lessons to learn. When we touch the depth of these things, we often become aware that they contain within them the truly great and the immortal. An apple falling to earth led Newton to discover gravity. A news report on the suicide of a young woman became, under Tolstoy's pen, the immortal "Anna Karenina." By chance, due to a broken organ, we have the immortal "Silent Night." The immortal is bred out of the ordinary. It is only by being filled with love for life that we can unearth the treasure within.

Each morning as I settle myself at my desk, my heart is filled with joy and solace, and I use my pen to call to the dove. In six years I have published over 100 short stories of 10,000 characters in length. As each night falls, I feel a sense of gratification: today I have written X words. My life is so rich, so full! My pen has created many people with their ups and downs. As I describe them, I seem myself to transcend the boundaries of time and space, dying and being born again and again. I mature along with them. Because of the "chance" impulse of submitting a manuscript, which set me upon the path of a literary career, I have been enabled to live a boundless, unlimited life within temporal limits. Thanks be to God, passing by your temple "by chance" I was able to hear your call and through it receive a life of faith, love and hope.

To be sure, the sculptor's knife of God carves for each of us a different life and the lessons God sets for us vary, but ours is a common task: to seek that dove, to call peace, love and true goodness into our world.

We are all lowly creatures. Not many of us can be counted among the immortal. There is only one Beethoven, one Tolstoy! However, "The light shines also in small places," "There are many tasks before you that you can fulfill," "You can also hold manna in your lowly hands" ("Hymns of Universal Praise," New Edition, # 366). And it is in the midst of this step by step effort that we can daily perfect and mature ourselves. One step up the Biblical ladder of Jacob will not take us to paradise. So also in the course of human life, we must climb stage by stage before we can reach any heights.

We of faith must also be people with a sense of mission, calling to that dove.

Tian Feng, April, 1986, p. 23.
translated by Janice Wickeri

STORY

12. Hong Taitai* – Cheng Naishan

Everybody called her Hong Taitai. Fifty years ago that name was celebrated throughout Shanghai society. A party marking a baby's first month of life, a wedding banquet or a birthday all fell short of perfection if Hong Taitai were not in attendance. There was a period after 1949 when the words 'Hong Taitai' seemed redolent of mothballs, as if they had been shaken from a camphorwood chest. But within the circle of the few rich families in Shanghai, for example, they still carried a good deal of weight right up until the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' of the 1960's. In Shanghai, one had one's own little circle of happiness and dared not brave the storms beyond. As long as one had three meals a day and stuck to one's own affairs, and thanks to the government policy of buying out the bourgeoisie, one could rest assured of eating at the International Hotel today, the 'Maison Rouge,' or Jade Buddha Temple tomorrow. No one would interfere. It was a very active period for Hong Taitai. The managers of both the public and private sections of the big restaurants and hotels all knew her, she was a very warm person. If Hong Taitai came forward to do the honors for the banquet on some special occasion, it would be reasonably priced, but ample. And the food would be something special, quite out of the ordinary.

My first impression of her dates from my tenth birthday.

I was the ninth child in the family, nicknamed 'Jiujiu,' or 'Little Ninth.' My parents were in America. When they left they had been afraid that I was too small to make such a long trip and would be in the way. Then the situation had changed, unexpectedly and so greatly, and I was left behind in Shanghai for good to live with my eldest brother and his wife. My brother was 21 years older than I and often joked that he had raised me, spoiling me as if I were his own daughter. My brother was like a father to me.

The day of my tenth birthday they did things up a bit on my account, though it was nothing more than noodles and a few dishes. In those days my brother and sister-in-law were rather careful of appearances. They couldn't have competed with Hong Taitai at any rate, she was the wife of a bourgeois. Brother and his wife, no matter what, were subject to their work units and they had to be careful. So they did no more than invite the brothers and sisters still in Shanghai over for an ordinary family dinner.

We had just sat down, we hadn't even got around to pouring the wine, when there was a knock at the door and a voice, vivacious and sweet, was heard, "I've come to beg a bowl of birthday noodles" (special extra-long noodles symbolic of long-life).

*Taitai is the traditional term for Mrs. or wife which fell into disuse after 1949 for political reasons and was severely discouraged as counter-revolutionary during the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese term is retained here, rather than replaced with the English 'Mrs.' to call attention to these connotations which the term 'Mrs.' lacks.

"It's Hong Taitai!" my sister-in-law gasped, startled, and pushing back her chair she fled into her room to change her dress.

"That's how thoughtful she is." My brother hastened to open the door, sisters and sisters-in-law busied themselves getting an extra bowl and chopsticks. It was chaos. Thinking back on it now, this Hong Taitai's entrance into my life was strangely like that of the domineering Wang Xifeng in the "Dream of Red Mansions" who always announced her arrival onto the scene with some arresting remark like: "So sorry I'm late welcoming visitors from afar!" The exact words were different, but the effect was the same. Her voice was so confident and hearty; she had an air of being completely at home.

"Hong Taitai!" The family stood to greet her.

"Ah, I made it on time." Hong Taitai said, removing her white kidskin gloves. She wore a square of checked wool on her head, the ends so long they fluttered with her every movement, adding immensely to her charm. When she took off her full-length cashmere coat, she was wearing a claret-colored qipao (the traditional high-necked, close-fitting Chinese dress) underneath, a phoenix embroidered in gold thread down the front, dazzling in its brilliance. In the 1950's such elegance had become a rare sight for anyone, let alone a child such as myself who had as yet seen nothing of the world. This sudden manifestation of such a gorgeously dressed beauty took my breath away.

She sat down next to me and pressed a red envelope into my hand. There was a shining golden character glued to the envelope - longevity - but because it was in the traditional, complicated form, it took me a moment to recognize it. At that time such red envelopes, used for giving presents of money to children on special occasions, were no longer on sale. Hong Taitai said she had glued it together herself of red paper; the character was also her own handiwork.

"Hong Taitai, really, you shouldn't put yourself out of pocket over Jiujiu's birthday." My sister-in-law had changed and come back out and though she was much younger than Hong Taitai, she looked faded beside her. The only thing one noticed in that whole room was that brilliant combination of red and gold; dazzling, but pleasingly so!

"Mr. Hong and I are old friends of your parents. I went to see Jiujiu at the hospital the day she was born. She was so alert and bright-eyed, such personality, not like most babies. When the nurse brought you in you were as red as a little ball of bean paste." She described it vividly and I was enthralled.

"At first your parents planned to come for you after awhile, but now look... They miss you terribly. I pity you that your mother isn't here. So though I pay no attention when one of your brothers or sisters has a birthday, Jiujiu is different, I have to come, stand in for your mother and raise a glass to you, wishing you long life!" Her words warmed my heart.

After the meal, my brothers and sisters put on some music, "A rose for you," a Xinjiang folk song quite popular at the time and the brothers and brothers-in-law all surged toward

Hong Taitai. But she frowned, and with a graceful flick of the hand in which she held a cigarette, said, "Put on Bing Crosby. Us old folks like the old songs." When that bewitching voice was heard, she laid aside her cigarette and began, tripping lightly, to dance. As she danced, the side slits in that claret qipao rose and fell, now hiding, now revealing, her graceful legs. I really hoped I might grow up a bit faster and be all that she was : full of life, charming, beautiful.

When all the guests had gone, I took out the red envelope she had given me and counted: forty yuan! Forty yuan in those days!

"A grand gesture. Mr. Hong is the only one who could afford her," sister-in-law said, pouting her lower lip. "What a memory she has, how could she remember Jiujiu's birthday, let alone that it was her tenth!" (According to Chinese custom, birthdays marking a full decade are the most important.)

"That's her stock-in-trade." Having said that, brother added sympathetically, "Her lot is a hard one, too. If she'd been born into a good family and got an education, she'd certainly have done well, an intelligent person like that."

Only later did I find out that Mr. Hong was in the raw silk business and when Mrs. Hong took up with him, he was already quite successful. He had a wife and family, but he rented a small house in the western district (of Shanghai) and lived there with Hong Taitai. She it was he took everywhere with him, thus in everybody's mind, she was "Hong Taitai." But there was talk, both out in the open and on the sly, some of it not very complimentary. As for the true facts of Hong Taitai's background, no one was able to find out. Even the Hong household `auntie' (a maid servant), Ah Ju, knew only that one night, carrying a pair of white leather bags, she had arrived with Mr. Hong and had been there ever since. It was said that Hong Taitai was a good cook and Mr. Hong had grown pink and stout under her care. Almost overnight she became well-known; Mei Lanfang, Zhou Xuan, (the former a renowned Peking Opera star ; the latter a popular film star), both were guests in the Hong family parlor. For a time, the house was filled with important guests every day. It seemed that this Hong Taitai, her pair of white leather cases in hand, had `arrived' in society. And with her arrival, Mr. Hong's business expanded.

My second meeting with Hong Taitai occurred while I was in senior middle school, at Mr. Hong's memorial service. Elder brother was the natural representative of our family, me he took along on the strength of my having been the recipient of Mr. Hong's forty yuan birthday gift. The service was held at the International Funeral Home. There were leading comrades from both the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Association of Industrialists present. Looking all around as we entered, I saw Hong Taitai, dressed in a black taffeta qipao with close-fitting sleeves, wearing a pair of the black leather pointed-toe shoes that were extremely popular in the sixties. Though there were indications that she was putting on weight, her graceful waist made her appear as lovely as ever. She walked composedly among those who had come to pay their condolences, greeting those who ought to be greeted, nodding to those who needed nodding to. The grief weighing on her made her seem even more dignified and noble. On the haimet holding the thick tresses was a spray of

pure white orchids, giving her a very refined air. As soon as her glance fell on us, she hurried to greet us.

"Jiujiu, you've become a young lady." Her gentle voice dispelled the dread I felt in this venue of eternal parting. "You're the next generation, wear a yellow flower." (Flowers, real or artificial, are worn as symbols of mourning.) Her soft white hand fastened the yellow bloom to my blouse. She began to speak of all Mr. Hong's good qualities and as she spoke she grew sad and dabbed at the tears in the corners of her eyes with a flaxen handkerchief. By comparison with the main wife, weeping and wailing to one side, she appeared to be the more highly bred, more worthy of the title Mrs. Yet in the end, it was mere similitude, for when the formalities began, she was shunted off to one side among the close acquaintances, a mourner who knew her place.

"Hong Taitai will suffer now! This is really difficult for her!" The other mourners commented surreptitiously among themselves.

"Yes, Mr. Hong was a man among men. But was he willing to entrust the family property to Hong Taitai? Naturally, it was safer with his wife. With him gone, Hong Taitai is left with nothing, not even a last word. It's hard for her."

Hearing such talk, looking at the lovely black-garbed Hong Taitai, I thought of Chen Bailu in Cao Yu's play, "Sunrise."

Once Mr. Hong died, we saw little of Hong Taitai. In the adults' eyes, she was, after all, a woman of uncertain past!

In a twinkling, I was twenty years old. The celebration was still a family affair. Recalling the gaiety of ten years ago, I couldn't help thinking of Hong Taitai. I accused elder brother of being a snob, but he said I was naive. As we locked horns, there was a soft knocking at the door. It was Hong Taitai's maid, Ah Ju, an 'auntie' about thirty years old from Shaoxing. She was carrying a red lacquered tray which held a specially prepared duck. Attached to the duck was a glittering gold 'shou' character - longevity - exactly like the one I had received ten years before.

"Hong Taitai's indisposed, so she sent me to convey her best wishes to Jiujiu, she prepared the duck herself," Ah Ju rattled off as instructed. One could see she had learned it off by heart before she came. Everyone asked after Hong Taitai and Ah Ju stammered, "The house has been let out. Hong Taitai has a second floor room with a balcony and a room on the first floor for me, next to the kitchen. It's enough for the two of us; it's fine, just fine. Goodbye now." With that she made her escape.

Everybody began to inspect the duck. It lacked nothing in appearance, fragrance or flavor. It was then just after the three hard years of natural calamities. A duck such as this one would cost at least ten yuan on the black market. At the same time that we were saying what a crime it was to eat Hong Taitai's food, we were all scrutinizing the duck. It was lean. It was quite possible that it was one Ah Ju had stood in line all night to buy, in which case it

wouldn't have cost much more than two yuan. Since it had been personally cooked and sent over specially, it seemed to be worth much more than that. But the gift lost something after all, since she hadn't come herself. "She's a very capable woman!" everyone agreed.

Not long after, the tempest (the Cultural Revolution) blew up in 1966 and people could hardly fend for themselves, much less worry about Hong Taitai.

Two years passed and things became relatively quiet. I happened to be walking by Hong Taitai's one day and looking up at her balcony without thinking, I suddenly discovered the old familiar curtain fabric. Spurred by this, I headed upstairs. A young man wearing a work overall with "work safely" printed on it, barred my way and asked in a rough manner, "Who are you? Who are you looking for?" "I'm looking for Hong Taitai," I stammered out. I regretted that as soon as it was out. To call someone "taitai" in those days was to invite criticism.

Unexpectedly, he sang out, "Hong Taitai, someone to see you," and led me upstairs.

"Jiujiu!" Hong Taitai welcomed me with surprise and pleasure and wiped away tears, moved. How rare in those days, a genuine sigh and embrace. I leaned against her bosom and cried.

The room was still furnished with French-style furniture. The mirror was covered with pictures of leaders, the best method of protecting mirrors in those days. Ah Ju brought tea and I had just said, "Thank you, Ah Ju," when Hong Taitai corrected me softly, "Call her sister Ah Ju, I've adopted her." That guy on the stairs had been Ah Ju's husband.

Hong Taitai was wearing a blue Chinese-style cotton jacket. With her hair cut short, revolutionary fashion, she looked much like someone who would be principal of an elementary school.

"Thanks to their moving in with me, no one dares bother me. The house was ransacked till there was not even one yuan left and I was half-dead myself. As I was crying over it, Ah Ju came and said we should bring her man to live with us, he was a worker and no one would dare bully me then. I said I didn't want to involve them in my troubles, but she said, 'Anyway I'm a servant. Even if worst came to worst I'd still be a servant. I'm not afraid.' I'm so grateful to Ah Ju and her family!"

"Hong Taitai," Sister Ah Ju cut her short, embarrassed.

"I've told you before, don't call me Hong Taitai. Call me mother."

"Ah," Ah Ju laughed ingenuously, "I can't do it. I'm not used to it."

"I get only 18 yuan a month for living expenses, so I have to depend on the two of them to take care of me and they have two children of their own." Hong Taitai sighed deeply. "Ai,

how could I have come to this! If I had only gone out to work earlier on, I wouldn't have got into this predicament, no income at all!"

Hong Taitai kept me on to dinner. She hadn't been able to break that habit. With Ah Ju, her husband and their two lovely innocent daughters, plus Hong Taitai and myself, there were six gathered round the square table. It was a home style meal of two dishes and a soup with an additional plate of scrambled egg in my honor. The bluish glow of the 8 watt fluorescent bulb shone gently on us. Hong Taitai now and again put some food into the children's bowls with her chopsticks, very grandmotherly. I thought I heard them call her "Nanna," and I found it very strange. "They mean mother's mother," Hong Taitai explained. "I like them to call me that." The children, seeing their opportunity, purposely raised a chorus of "Nanna," and Hong Taitai beamed. I sensed that she had never before laughed so contentedly. Her son-in-law stolidly scooped in his food without saying a word. But when I was taking my leave he suddenly dashed ahead turning on the stairway lights all the way down. "My son-in-law hasn't any education, he's a bit rough, but he's a very good man," Hong Taitai told me softly. "There's no need to be afraid of him."

When I got back and told my brother and sister-in-law what had happened, they expressed great admiration for Hong Taitai, "That Hong Taitai, she can take the bad with the good. What an incredibly capable woman!"

Later I got married, tied down to housework and child and I hardly made the effort to see my brother and sister-in-law, let alone Hong Taitai.

In 1982, my parents made their first visit back to Shanghai from the US. All the old friends gathered and of course Hong Taitai was invited as well. During the Cultural Revolution, many of them had lost touch with each other and they were glad of the excuse to renew relationships, but though it grew quite late, Hong Taitai still didn't appear.

"Ah, didn't you know, she's the famous Mei Lanfang." (Mei Lanfang, homophonous with Man laifang - a slowpoke).

Just as we were really growing anxious, she arrived, accompanied by Ah Ju. She was wearing a downy mohair coat over a close-fitting black satin jacket, and though her hair was raven black, you could tell it had been dyed. Yes, she had aged some, but she was as graceful and refined as ever. The company rose to greet her, but she pushed Ah Ju forward, "My adopted daughter."

When it came time to eat, no place had been set for Ah Ju.

"Ah Ju, go out and have a bowl of noodles and come back for Hong Taitai in two hours," we suggested.

"Just squeeze together a bit," Hong Taitai, looking after her own, pulled Ah Ju to the table and asked the servant to bring another bowl and chopsticks. The others were rather startled, the atmosphere grew somewhat embarrassed. Though society as a whole has changed, such

circles still cling to iron-clad rules. Before all the hot dishes had been served, Hong Taitai got up to leave, saying she had something to do.

The gathering fell to discussing her.

"How could she take a servant into the family? She must be crazy!"

"Well, it's not so surprising. Her own background is more or less the same."

"That's what happens when one lives with servants. You become petty and talk nonsense." These dreadful comments were served up with the food and drink, dropped airily from their mouths. I hastily gathered up my child and left.

A few days ago, a woman friend of mine moved, by chance to a place in Hong Taitai's lane and I dropped by to see her, since I was in the neighborhood.

She welcomed me happily, "Jiujiu's come!" Her silver hair made her look kinder than ever. She said she no longer dyed it. "I'm getting old and it doesn't turn out well anymore," she said, patting her hair. Sister Ah Ju politely brought tea and sweets for me.

"Jiujiu thinks of me. Of the old crowd, you're the only one who thinks of coming to see me. How big is your son now?"

"Ten." As I said it, I remembered my own tenth birthday and told her how struck I had been by her beauty.

She smiled wanly. "That's past."

She told me that in the beginning a few old friends still came to see her and now everything was back to normal (i.e. after the Cultural Revolution), there was even dancing, but she was done with it all because her stiff old legs couldn't manage it now.

"Actually it's all a waste of money and time. Ah Ju is so busy. I can't do much to help her, but I can knit a few sweaters, to thank her for being so good to me. They're extremely frugal themselves, but they know my delicate appetite and there's always one dish especially for me at each meal. There aren't many daughters - even natural-born ones - like that." She touched my sleeve, speaking emotionally, while her hands never ceased their work on the small sweater she was knitting.

"Mother Hong, what are you making?" A passing neighbor stopped in.

"My granddaughter's having her baby any day now, I'm knitting it a little sweater."

"Well! The fourth generation! You're very lucky, Mother Hong!"

"Yes, I am," Hong Taitai replied contentedly, and she smiled.

from People's Daily, 29 September 1986
translated by Janice Wickeri

SERMONS

13. Building Up the Body in Love – K.H. Ting

"Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love." (Eph. 4:15-16)

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: `The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven lampstands. I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet, this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev. 2:1-7)

We have just heard the letter to the church in Ephesus written by John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This letter praises the church in Ephesus. The strong point of that church is that it can recognize false apostles for what they are. It draws a clear line between itself and the Nicolaitans and does not tolerate these false teachers. It is a church capable of making the distinction between right and wrong and of struggling against what is wrong, thus bearing a witness to Christ through perseverance. But the Spirit also points out that the problem with the church in Ephesus was that it had departed from the love it at first possessed.

This letter does not blame the church in Ephesus for its struggles but rather praises it. Under certain circumstances it is necessary to purify the church for the sake of its witness. But the letter reminds its readers that it is not quite enough just to hate evil. The church is the community of those who love God and of the children of God who love each other. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians also talks about the church upbuilding itself in love and about Christians speaking the truth in love. Struggles, no matter how necessary, are likely to injure the body of the church and its principle of love. Thus, at the appropriate time, the Spirit asks the church to repent and calls it to pick up the love it has lost so as to build itself up in love.

The passage in Revelation says: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." So this letter has not been sent only to the church in Ephesus, but to all churches, and this certainly includes our church in China today.

We are meeting as representatives of Christians from all parts of China. I think these two New Testament passages contain some message which the Spirit wishes to pass on to us.

Since the very beginning, the Three-Self Movement has aimed at improving the life and witness of the church. In order to achieve this there was a period of time when we could not but devote much of our attention to struggles. A lot of them had to do with the purification of the church. They were necessary and, I believe, were approved of by the Spirit. It would be hard to imagine the state of affairs our church would find itself in today without them, and we are thankful to those colleagues who contributed much in those struggles. But, there is also a time for us to remind ourselves of the task of building up the church in love. This is the prayer of our Christian people. The more our Three-Self Movement turns to this task, the greater their support for three-self.

I am not saying that our leaders have neglected in the past to give attention to this task, nor am I saying that we are now to do away with all struggles and to love all sorts of disorders in the church. We are certainly not to approve of all the anti-China and anti-three self offensives on the part of some who are using Hong Kong as their base. No this is not at all what I am saying. Rather, with respect to our over-all national situation, breaking down must give way to building up, destruction must give way to construction, struggle must give way to reconciliation. Three-self needs upholding, but it also needs implementing. We want to implement three-self by building up the Body of Christ. The correctness and necessity of three-self is proven by the fact of improvements in the life and witness of our church. Today there are places where some Christians harbor certain misgivings towards Three-Self, not so much because they are opposed to the three-self principle as because they somehow feel that certain things done in the name of Three-Self seem not to be building up the church but rather harming it. As Three-Self considers the building up of the church its task, Christians will support it wholeheartedly and the justness of the cause of Three-Self will be taken for granted.

The Standing Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement called for the strengthening of the life and witness of the church in 1956. The formation of the China Christian Council six years ago was another landmark in the same direction. It is especially heartening to note the progress in this respect over the last six years. We thank God for the contributions made by his many faithful servants among whom we remember particularly Bishop Cheng who cannot be with us.

In criticizing empty political sloganeering we often hear that good politics should vindicate itself in good practice and high political consciousness in excellence in specialized fields. Similarly, our call for church autonomy and independence must bear its fruit in the building up of the church, just as the worth of our work for self-government, self-support and self-propagation must be proven by governing ourselves well, supporting ourselves well and propagating ourselves well. Since the reimplementation of the policy of religious freedom in our country in 1979, there have emerged very many churches and other centers for worship and meetings. There are countless problems that must be considered in order to build them up. All of us who are leaders in various levels of Three-Self must become, through study and spiritual seeking, truly specialists in the building up of Christian communities. Our Three-Self organizations and Christian councils on the national, provincial and local levels must rid themselves of all the old ways of thought, attitudes and habits accumulated in the days of

struggles to the extent that they still exist. Our working style should be that of the church and the pastor, no matter whether we are ordained or not. We need to have great sympathy for pastoral colleagues in daily contact with grass-roots Christians, do everything we can to serve them, and not evade but solve the problems they encounter in that work. To build up the church, elevate the quality of the church, to enable our church to have favor in the sight of God, of the people around us and especially of Christ's disciples, - this is the central task of Three Self and of our Christian councils. We must refrain from doing anything that is contrary to the nature of the church and may make our members sorry and sad.

In China, a scientist who devotes himself or herself to scientific research, elevates the level of his or her specialization and produces scientific results that uplift the welfare of humanity is considered politically to be a good scientist; a teacher who devotes himself or herself to the work of education, elevates his or her teaching ability and produces well-trained citizens for our country is considered politically to be a good teacher. The same is true of doctors, attendants, sales-persons, workers, peasants and artists. In the same way one who is faithful to God's trust, elevates his or her theological and spiritual level, does a good job of pastoral work, feeds the sheep with the right food at the right time and enables them to play an active role in nation-building ought to be considered a pastor who truly cherishes the country and the church.

It is both the will of God and the wish of Christians to make the church truly the church. It is also the call of our motherland. All enterprises and groups of our motherland are like the children of a family. The family is good only if the children grow up well. Our church is one of these enterprises in the eyes of our country. Our country expects us to do a good job. Thus for us to work for the building up of the church is both to cherish the church and to cherish the country.

Among our colleagues we especially need to uphold and emulate those who support Three-Self and do good pastoral work for the spiritual nourishment of the flock.

We need a correct understanding of the relation between Three-Self and the church. The church is not subordinate to Three Self. The church is the body of Christ, the dwelling of the risen Christ, the fellowship of saints throughout the ages. The church is our subject while Three-Self and Christian councils are products which have emerged under certain concrete historical conditions. They are servants of the church.

We also need a correct understanding of the relation between Three-Self and Christian councils. Three-Self is a movement of Chinese Christians to rally support for our church and for socialism; Christian councils on various levels are organizations of Christians for strengthening the work of the church. Their relationship is like that between the left and the right hands and in all matters they work closely together.

Three-Self belongs to the totality of Chinese Protestantism, and so do the Christian councils. No matter where Chinese Protestant Christians are found, as long as they are here in China, as long as they honor Jesus Christ as Lord, there is where Three Self and Christian

councils should be with all their work of love, of liaison, of pastoral ministry, of supplying Bibles, of serving, of uniting, of educating and of helping to overcome their difficulties.

Our church, in building itself up in love, allows for diversity and does not aim at uniformity in matters of faith and worship. In 1 Corinthians 12:3 Paul tells us that no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Thus we have no right to dismiss the belief of other Christians out of hand. Mutual respect in matters of faith and worship is an important guiding principle in order to maintain and enlarge our unity. In matters of faith and worship we must not force the minority to follow the majority; we urge the majority to care for the minority. But we also hope that any minority will not neglect to recognize, with thankful hearts, that Christians of other backgrounds have also been redeemed by Christ, that our faith is basically the same, and that we have all received our common faith from Jesus Christ himself. To ignore this commonality which unites us and to dwell only on differences, that is, to magnify minor characteristics so as to overshadow what unites us, is a denial of the work of Christ, a departure from Paul's teaching, and a division of the body of Christ. Paul teaches us that it is not up to the eye to say to the hand it has no use for the hand, or up to the head to say to the foot it has no use for the foot. We belong together to the one body of Christ. This is a truth about his body, a mystery of the Kingdom, Christ's own prayer to the Father, and his own message to his disciples before he left them in his flesh. It is only as we love each other that others would know us to be Christ's disciples.

According to Christ, the church may be compared to a field in which there are both good seeds and bad ones. A church with weeds is still a church. The seven churches mentioned in Revelation all have faults, but they still stand as golden lampstands among which he who holds the seven stars in his right hand walks. Jesus does not ask us to spend all our time in trying to pull out the weeds, nor does he want us to move the wheat away from the field and have it transplanted to some other field. He says, "Let both grow together until the harvest." In other words, he will separate them then. Today, in our church, our task is to grow, to enable the wheat to grow faster than the weeds and not to allow the weeds to grow so fast as to crowd out the wheat. Those who are good seeds are not to remain outside of the field, accusing this one and that one of being bad seeds or weeds. Our job is not to blame or pull out, but to enter, to grow, so that our church grows in size and in quality.

Many many years ago, in Palestine, there were two brothers living at two ends of a piece of land inherited from their father. The elder brother had a family but the younger was still single. One night after harvest, the elder brother thought, "I have a family and more hands while my brother is single and must have difficulties in the cultivation of the land." He began to move a lot of the crops in the direction of his brother's dwelling. Just at that time, the younger brother was also thinking, "I am single and can manage easily while my elder brother must have difficulties maintaining a family." He also began to move some of his crops in the direction of the elder brother. They met in the middle in darkness and all the crops fell on the ground. There they embraced each other in love. Does not this remind us of the words: "Behold, how good it is for brothers to dwell in unity?" As the story goes, it was on that very spot that Jerusalem and the Temple were built many years later. This is in a true sense the church building up itself in love.

As we meet here in Beijing, let us recall the meeting in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. That was not a "regular meeting" but one that was, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, mind-liberating. It therefore played an important role in the building up of the church in love. We pray that the Holy Spirit will also guide us, so that a church true to Three-Self will emerge on the eastern horizon, leading many men and women to Christ. May God strengthen the work of our hands. The work of our hands may God strengthen.

Sermon preached at the closing service of worship at the Fourth Chinese National Christian Conference, Beijing, August 23, 1986. This English translation has been slightly shortened from the Chinese original.

14. Training in Godliness – Zhao Zhi'en

Text: 1Tim 3:16-4:16

The Christian life ought to be a godly life. A preacher or theological student ought to exercise him or herself in godliness even more. Godliness applies mainly to the life of faith. Let us examine the term 'godliness'. Its meaning includes belief in God, the idea of respect for God, dedication of one's life and enthusiastic service as well as worship and honor. Consequently, the implications of 'godliness' should be to maintain a respectful faith and a pious attitude towards God.

But it is not only a matter of respect for God, godliness must also be linked to our actions. Godliness is linked to righteousness (1Tim.2:2), and good conduct (1Tim.6:11) in the Bible and Peter lists godliness as one of the eight moral characteristics Christians ought to have (1 Peter 1:5-7). Thus, a person living a godly life ought to live within God's decrees, be open to God's purpose and act in ways pleasing to both God and humankind.

Paul entreats the young Timothy, "Train yourself in godliness." There are three aspects to such training.

One: Safeguard the profound mystery of godliness (3:16).

The Christian living a life of godliness must above all defend "the profound mystery of the true faith" (1Tim. 3:9). Paul summarizes this profound mystery here in six phrases. This is the simplest article of faith of the early church and was also a part of its songs and poetry praising God. These six phrases state Jesus Christ's glory manifest from his coming down to earth to his ascent into heaven. This profound mystery is the "pillar and bulwark of truth" for the church. If we study it carefully, we will understand that this profound mystery of godliness is not only the faith of the incarnation, but is a standard which must find concrete expression in the believer's life. For example:

(1) "God is revealed in the flesh": Jesus' life was God's manifestation of himself in a form humanity was most capable of understanding: in the physical Jesus, people can see the thoughts and actions of God. Today all who would live in godliness must enable others to see in them this image of Jesus. It is through the Christian's manner and actions that others can see that we have the light of Jesus' glory within us.

(2) "Vindication through the Holy Spirit": Although Jesus came into the world in the flesh, he was nevertheless without sin. This was due to his total obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Only thus could he be vindicated in the Spirit. We must ask ourselves whether, out of consideration for our own physical desires, we have defied the Holy Spirit's guidance and become slaves to evil.

(3) "Seen by angels": Though when Jesus came into the world he lived on the earth, heaven's angels still saw him do battle with the evil spirits of the air. Christians live on the earth, but if they, like Jesus, vanquish temptation, then angels in heaven will share their joy.

(4) "Preached among the nations": If Christ came to earth only as Savior of the Jews, in accordance with a narrow Jewish ethnicity, then the gospel's truth could not spread to the ends of the earth. Today, however, there are people in every place who accept Christ's truth and a church being built on the soil of China. How then, can we fail to tenaciously safeguard this profound mystery of godliness?

(5) "Believed on in the world": Christ came into the world as a suffering servant, became a criminal and was nailed to the cross, after which he ascended into heaven again. That year there were gathered together only 120 believers. Nowadays there are more than a billion people worldwide who have been converted to Christ. This fact illustrates the miracle of church growth. Although people then would have found it difficult to believe, it is common knowledge now.

(6) "Taken up in glory" : Christ came into the world as a suffering servant. Yet when he finally ascended again, his body was glorified and rose up to the highest heaven. In future he will come again as the glorified King. Thus, one who lives in godliness must look forward to the future with hope.

A godly life is founded on faith. If one is weak in faith, then one is sure to stumble in life as well. A godly person must hold forever fast to faith and love the Lord and his brethren. This is the only way to ensure one's ability to show forth glory for the Lord.

Two: We must be concerned for the purity of the church (4:1-7).

Paul reminds Timothy that the training in godliness of pastors and church workers must be combined with the purification of the church and the elimination of heresy. Christianity is a religion concerned with brotherly love and the church is the link between brothers and sisters joined together in unity. Training in godliness is not expressed only in the individual life of prayer and scripture reading, or in one's inner faith in God. More than this, it must be concerned with the healthy development of the church. Paul exhorts Timothy that in addition to defending the profound mystery of the true faith, he must have a concern for the church as a whole.

In those years, the church in Ephesus "abandoned the true way." They spread the heresy of dual origins, one good and one evil, of the universe. Paul calls this the "devil's truth." Advocates of this heresy held that God is the fountainhead of good. The human soul comes from God and thus it is good. The material world, including the human body, comes from the evil source. Consequently, the material things of the world and the human body are evil; the spirit alone is good. This dualism which opposes spirit and matter inevitably had two evil consequences in the church of Ephesus. The first was to forbid marriage which they considered evil since it stemmed from the needs of the lower bodily instincts. Even normal marriage was denied this way, for to be godly one must remain in a state of physical

innocence. The second was to forbid certain foods. In particular meat or fish were not permitted. The body is matter and food is matter; by supplying the body's needs they believed that food could affect the spirit and its training in godliness.

Today this reasoning seems absurd, because in Genesis God considered the act of creating the world "very good" (1:31). God created man and woman according to his image and blessed them and he did not forbid marriage (1:27-28). Furthermore God said, "You may use every living animal for your food, I grant you all these the same as the plants" (9:3). Thus though the heresy of the time which denied matter and life and recommended bodily suffering seemed to be a manifestation of godliness, it was actually "obeying the temptations of the devil." So Paul said, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (4:4).

A godly person then, is also one who "knows the truth" (4:3). We ought not to forget that the grace God gave us is so bountiful. He has prepared everything for us and we ought to accept with grateful hearts.

Some people would probably say that the Nestorian heresy has disappeared from today's church. But history tells us that when the church is in the process of development it is difficult to avoid situations wherein all kinds of mistakes manifest themselves. Paul points out that training in godliness certainly must "cut away that worldly speech and old ladies' absurd and vague talk." In those days these words were aimed at the common practice of going to great lengths to cultivate asceticism as well as at the Nestorian theory of illusion used to refute the physical existence of Jesus. People's godliness must be linked to the concrete purity of the church.

Over the past few years, the "Yellers" heresy, which exaggerates the power and influence of the devil, "attributing control over all people, affairs and things that govern the world to Satan," has appeared in our Chinese church. The Yellers emphasize that, with the exception of the Spirit, "the whole world lies under the hand of the Evil One." In what way is this type of propaganda different from the heresy Paul pointed out? Does this mean that the Christian's godliness and spirituality must be won at the expense of human thoughts and feelings and individual preferences? Does it mean that all the true, good and beautiful things of this world are under Satan's hand and not under the grace of God?

The God we believe in is tender and gentle, merciful and compassionate. His feelings are not a blank, not abstract, but are expressed towards the great mass of the people. Christ's love is always joined to and bound up with the people. It is only because Christ has feelings for humanity that he is able to move the people of our times. And it is only because Christ is the one most able to understand and sympathize with people, sharing in their joys and sorrows, that he is able to shoulder the yoke alongside us. Paul tells us "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). You must "rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). Consequently, besides defending the profound mystery of the true faith, one who lives the godly life must also be concerned with whether one's brothers and sisters can stand firm in the true faith and not be rocked to and fro by heresy. If our godliness can be expressed in helping others to do this,

then we will have both fulfilled our duty as good servants of the church and have made progress in training ourselves in the godly life.

Three: You must bear the true meaning of godliness (4:8-16).

The godliness of some is manifest only in external appearances. Paul said "You must avoid this kind of man" (2Tim. 3:5), because godliness devoid of true inner meaning can become hypocritical. The godliness which is a manifestation of inner truth requires training. Just as in athletics, only with daily training will progress be made. Since his youth, Timothy had been a godly man. Both his maternal grandmother and his mother were devout believers. But Paul urges him to continue to train frequently, otherwise even he may fall behind. Paul puts to Timothy several standards for this training:

(1) Truly godly people must be models for other believers in five respects. Paul advocates that one's godliness must be manifest in moral character and in love towards others. The true meaning of godliness is primarily inner faith, but the extent of that faith must be expressed in words, actions, love and purity.

Piety towards God means sincerity towards people. Speech often reflects one's inner attitude. In the wisdom literature of the Old Testament great emphasis is placed on the relationship between the heart and the mouth. Even when he is in extreme agony, Job does not sin by word, which indicates that he was holding fast to the true faith in his heart (Job 1:22; 2:10). Ecclesiastes advises that people be devout, that they not talk rashly in front of others, nor be too quick to speak (Eccles. 5:2). Even more words of advice and encouragement are found in Proverbs indicating that purity of speech encourages inner purity. James 3 particularly stresses the importance of the tongue, as does Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 1 John, and many other scriptures. Sincere language is without boasting, does not exaggerate, flatter nor fawn, rebut nor malign. Honest words come from honest thoughts. We cannot have godliness in word alone.

True godliness ought also to be manifest in moral training. Christianity has been concerned with morality from the beginning. In the early second century in Bythnia, the Governor-General, Pliny, wrote reports to the Roman emperor Trajan, on the situation of Christians in that area, saying "They are already accustomed to accepting the restrictions of oaths they have taken and thus do not steal, rob or commit adultery and would never renege on any guarantee they have given." Thus Christian godliness is expressed in lifelong purity and Christian behavior ought to be honest, self-controlled and chaste, strict with self but generous to others. Such behavior is common in the church today. If the church could not improve people's moral character, then how could it testify that it still has a contribution to make in the world?

(2) The godliness of the preacher must lie in loyalty to the office of reading the scriptures, moral exhortation and guidance.

In the early church, the scriptures were read to the congregation during worship in accordance with Jewish synagogue practice. The Bible is the word of God, the center of

individual spiritual cultivation and of collective worship. If we want to be reborn in the Spirit, receive light and consolation and lead a pure and holy life, we cannot do so apart from the scriptures. But a preacher needs many years of study. Moreover a preacher must come into contact with the constant changes of real life before he or she can truly understand the scriptures. The truth of Christianity arises out of practice. A preacher, together with other believers, can only progress in training for godliness through the reality of teaching and exhortation.

(3) Training in godliness requires total concentration and perseverance. In devoting ourselves to the service of the church, we cannot, above all, overlook our mission. We must frequently consider whether there is any new information we can use in our pastoral work so that the intrinsic faith of the scriptures can be retold in terms modern people can understand.

Paul asks that Timothy let his growth in godliness be seen by others. His youth doesn't matter. He need only devote himself to the task and he will make daily progress in real usefulness in his work and in training himself.

Perseverance in training is manifest in the person of the preacher. A preacher must truly combine his or her life and teachings, if he is to save both himself and those who hear him. In preaching the gospel to others, the preacher must take care "that he himself is not cast away."

Nanjing Theological Review, June, 1985, p. 61.
translated by Jill Hughes

15. Build Ourselves Up in Faith – Han Wenzao

Text: 2 Peter 1:1-11, 20

Today I would like to talk to you about how to build yourselves up in the true faith.

You have come to the seminary from a variety of places. You came bringing all kinds of diverse thoughts to your study of theology, but by now you have a more unified perspective. You came with general and vague ideas about the purpose of studying theology; by now you have a fairly clear grasp of that purpose.

As I understand it, you have come here to devote yourselves to the establishment of a Chinese church that meets the needs of our nation. You have come to take upon yourselves the three-self patriotic principles of self-administration, self-support, and self-propagation. You have come in order to prepare yourselves to lead other Christians on the path of loving country and church.

While you were here, you studied a number of subjects, including Holy Scripture, hymnology, culture, foreign languages, politics, theology, church history, and pastoral training. A theology student should have abundant and diverse knowledge. But at the same time, he or she should pay attention to the problem of the building up of human character. Actually, the pursuit of knowledge is one aspect of this goal.

After you graduate, you will assume different posts in the church. Some of you will train pastors, teach theology, or become involved in church administration. Others will write church materials or work on religious art. No matter what work you will be doing in the future, there is one thing you can count on: it will involve guiding and training other people. But if you want to guide others, you must first know the way yourself. If you want to train others, you must first train yourself.

No one has ever seen God. And there is no one alive today who has seen Jesus Christ. For two thousand years, people have only been able to see other believers in Christ, especially pastors and church workers. Because of this, our lives and actions must become a way of transmitting our knowledge of Christ. How important this is!

I have a few thoughts on self-discipline to share with everyone.

(1) Self-discipline, that is, working to improve your character, is a lifetime task. Can we say, then, that, since it is a lifetime task and we still have many years ahead of us, there is no need to exert ourselves? I don't think so. Self-discipline should begin right now. If your family spoiled you before you came here, you will need to change your childish bad habits. Building character is similar to constructing a house. First you must lay the foundation. The higher the house is, the more solid the foundation must be. This is the meaning of Matthew 7, which speaks of two foundations, one built on rock and the other on sand. Once the foundation is laid, the house can be built floor by floor. Building character is like this. If the

foundation is not secure and strong, then increased work, additional knowledge and a rich spiritual life will be wasted and can even prove harmful.

(2) Self-discipline, character-building, is a big task, a serious task. Can we say, then, that because it is so important, we can relax our vigilance in small, unimportant matters? This is a mistake. Self-discipline is built on these small concerns, just as a house is built brick by brick. The 36-story Jinling Hotel here in Nanjing could never have been built without thousands of smaller prefabricated parts. We could say that our characters are composed of small parts not unlike drops of blood. From a single drop of blood, chemists can ascertain a person's blood type and diagnose all kinds of diseases. In the same way, the little things of life can reflect our inner world and reveal an aspect of our spiritual make-up.

The Book of Acts, besides speaking of faith, exhorts us to pay attention to our behavior in all things. Our witness is expressed in our actions. Christ's life is reflected through us by means of these actions. Here in the seminary, you lead a collective life. Will you consider only your own needs, or will you think of the group, put its needs first, and sacrifice yourself a little for the progress of others? Probably you will continue to have problems in this regard. If you do, you will be giving in to self-indulgence and building your house on sand. Peter tells us that we should be solicitous of others, especially since we all come from different backgrounds. Reflect on your personal character and level of self-discipline. Begin to discard those habits and thoughts that obstruct their growth, no matter how difficult that might be. Concentrate on developing those unselfish virtues that will benefit yourself and others.

(3) Self-discipline must be a comprehensive pursuit. Can we say that a seminary offers only spiritual growth, or that its purpose is to disseminate knowledge and that is all? These are too limited. Peter says that you should try our hardest "to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with fortitude, fortitude, with piety, piety with brotherly kindness, and brotherly kindness with love." James also encourages us to seek good conduct even though we have faith. Paul teaches that we must continually grow in knowledge and experience so that we can learn to distinguish evil. In our relationship with God, we express ourselves through prayer. In our relationship with others, we can only express God's truth through our virtuous actions. We must therefore guard against a narrow understanding of knowledge. If our knowledge is limited to ideas and neglects the knowledge of virtue and ethical behavior, then our faith will be shallow and ineffective.

We believe that everything in the universe was created by God, and that he set up the laws that govern them. As Paul writes in his Epistle to the Romans, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" Our intellects can only aid us to better discern God's wonderful works and his glorious will.

(4) Self-discipline is, naturally, something every person should expend time and effort on. Still, we cannot belittle the need for mutual help and encouragement. Because we are all Christians, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. The seminary is like a large family. The

establishment of a good spirit in the seminary depends on everyone. One person's bad behavior can influence everyone else. Conversely, a good spirit can help each individual's progress. As Paul writes in Ephesians 4:15-16, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love."

To sum up, building character is one of our most important tasks. Because we will later enter into the midst of believers and people in general, we want to grow in virtue so that we can lead others.

I would like to tell you a story. There was a pastor who was a very good preacher. One day he was standing in the pulpit, preaching about how to recognize, imitate, and live in the manner of Christ. He had just reached the crux of his sermon, when his wife walked in the door carrying a bedroll. She climbed up to the pulpit and set the bedroll down. To her husband she said, "Don't bother to come home. Here is your bedding. You can sleep here on this pulpit. You preach so well, but your behavior is something else again." This story satirizes those whose actions do not match their words. We don't want to become this kind of person.

Most of you are comparatively young. I hope you will, like Timothy, recall the encouraging words of Paul, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

Nanjing Theological Review, June, 1985, p. 51
Translated by Craig Moran

16. The Holy Spirit: Our Water of Life, Source and Power of Light and Harmony – Zhang Jinglong

Text: Genesis 1:1-2; Ezekiel 11:19; Acts 2:17

Prayer: Holy gracious Father, we pray for your Spirit to be with us in our obedience and faithful commitment, arousing in us our creaturely consciousness and guiding us into your life and harmony in the process of reconstructing your Temple in China for your glory. Amen.

In our daily Christian life of devotions, prayer and acts of repentance, we seldom fail to pray for the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit. This is because the Spirit is dynamic and effective, sharper than a two-edged sword, swifter than the whirlwind.

The Spirit can pierce into and identify our innermost thoughts. He is capable of opening up our unenlightened hearts and minds, overshadowing darkness and bringing us into the light of sanctification and renewal in the life of Christ.

We find the Holy Spirit expressed in various ways in the Bible. In the first chapter of Genesis, the Spirit is portrayed as the "word" or "logos" of God. In the Hebrew tradition the Spirit is also described at times as "wind" or "breath."

It is recorded in the beginning of Genesis that the Spirit was moving over the face of the waters when God created heaven and earth. The Spirit moving over the face of the waters is symbolic of the Spirit's participation in God's creation. In other words, God, with the active movement of his Spirit, created heaven and earth. The testimony of the book of Genesis shows that the Spirit is necessarily linked to God's creation. Furthermore, the whole Bible reveals to us that wherever there is activity or movement by the Spirit, there is bound to be God's creation or recreation, and thus, the living expression of God's gracious love through his Spirit.

When the universe began, God created light through his Spirit so that heaven and earth were no longer totally enveloped in darkness. Therefore, the movement of the Spirit is the Initiator of light overcoming darkness in the world. To put it the other way round, light itself points to and vividly symbolizes the activity of the Spirit and the purpose of God.

God created light through his Spirit, thus laying the groundwork for his creation of life out of non-life. The Spirit made it possible for God to create not only ordinary life-forms, but also humanity - the highest form of life on earth. The book of Genesis tells us, "...then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being" (2:7). Here "breathed into" refers to the activity of the Spirit which brought life to the human species and to the relationship between God and humanity, as well that between people. God's creation of life and relationships is again a wonderful witness to his loving grace.

At creation, the movement of the Spirit manifested tremendous power, transforming chaos into a universe of original harmony. This universe, under the power of the Spirit, is moved toward higher forms of participation in God's triune harmony, and is the place where God realizes his willed harmony through man on earth.

The realization of God's beautiful harmony on earth has been centrally and concretely revealed in the person of Jesus. Jesus, as a man of Nazareth, formed a unique harmony with his Father through his faithful commitment to the Father's will. This beautiful harmony between the Father and the Son was apparently effected by the Spirit. The Marcan gospel has this to say, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; and with thee I am well pleased'" (1: 9-10). The gospel tells us that from the moment Jesus was baptized, the Spirit descended upon him and took charge of his divine ministry and his whole life on earth. In the power of the Spirit he was driven into the desert; in the power of the Spirit he went to the synagogue at Nazareth and remarked, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke 4:18).

It is evident, therefore, that the baptism, the overcoming of the temptation, the preaching of the kingdom, the healing and performing of miracles, the self-sacrifice on the cross for the remission of our sins, and the resurrection of Jesus the Christ, all revealed Jesus' inner spiritual harmony with his Father. This spiritual harmony lies in Jesus' freedom in committing himself faithfully to the Spirit of his Father-God. By means of that freedom, all his words and actions were one and in oneness with the movement of the Holy Spirit, effectively enabling the will of his Father to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Being filled and guided by the Spirit thus caused Jesus to enter into a beautiful harmony with his Father. This unique harmony was a gracious gift out of God's unqualified love for the redemption and salvation of humanity. It is through human beings' participation in Jesus that they may share with him this beautiful harmony here and now and in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, entered into the world to save humanity by transforming its intense disharmony into his own loving and gracious harmony, thus mending the broken relationships between God and humanity and between people themselves.

The Spirit in Jesus is also the Spirit of promise and hope. Toward the end of the Lucan gospel and at the beginning of the Acts, our Lord Jesus told his disciples not to leave Jerusalem until the promise had been fulfilled and the Holy Spirit bestowed. Jesus says in the gospel of Luke, "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (24:49). It is also mentioned in Acts that, "And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me'" (1:4). Jesus' promise to his disciples had unique spiritual and historical significance, because Jesus well understood that after his resurrection his Father's promise of salvation was to be continued by the "Paraclete," namely the Holy Spirit. This promise embodied God's love and providence

towards humankind. The indwelling of the Spirit who is free and omnipresent in the world and history is an effective source of light-generating, life-renewing and harmony creating power. It is open to all people, accompanying and empowering human beings' struggle for light against darkness, for life against death, for love against hate, for justice against injustice, and for peace and harmony against chaos and disharmony. The Spirit is the Creator Spirit who generates in us the happy experience of Immanuel, of being with the Holy Father and the Holy Son, of being brought into a relationship of 'sonship' with God through Christ. Thus we are formed into a church community in which the Christ-like feature gradually realizes itself through our spiritual thrust towards a truly indigenous church. The Spirit also breathes into us an infinite hope for God's future, when "in the last day it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17).

Christ's sending of the Spirit at Pentecost reveals that God's love and grace for humanity is unfathomable. Despite the fact that humanity betrayed Christ time and again, Christ has granted us the Spirit unconditionally and let the Spirit come humbly into human history that the world may be illumined and renewed in life. At the same time, the gift of the Spirit is bestowed upon those who are willing to be co-workers with God on earth, following Christ, in the power of the Spirit. They participate in the work of transformation: of the Father's love into concrete love for one's neighbor, of God's justice into human justice, of God's mercy and forgiveness into human mercy and forgiveness and of God's triune harmony into harmony among humankind. The kingdom of God belongs to those who participate with the Spirit in transforming the world for the better and in harmonizing the relationship between God and humanity and that between people.

By the same token, the gift of the Spirit from Christ manifests God's final purpose of salvation for humanity. As we know, the Spirit of God is absolutely free, for his movement resembles that of wind, "the wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes" (John 3:8). Yet God purposely humbled and limited himself in sending Christ and the Spirit into the world to bring, according to his own will, the world and its history into his freedom, love and glory. The aim of the Paraclete, as God's guarantor, is to gradually fulfill and perfect God's created light, life and harmony unto the day when all people sing "Hallelujah" in the holy city and when "night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). The culmination of salvation by God will also be the time when the renewed life of humanity is grafted onto the life of the Lamb. Through the gift of the "water of life" and the "tree of life," we shall joyfully share with the Lamb the shining glory or the beautiful harmony from God's Alpha to Omega.

The future of God with humanity is intrinsically related to the Spirit who worked in Jesus and who is working among us here and now. The coming of Jesus Christ and his whole journey on earth discloses to us that new wine cannot be put into old wineskins. It is an urgent warning to us that the light, life and harmony which Christ brought to us through the Spirit are not supposed to be judged by the letter of the law or by old-fashioned traditions. A spiritual humanity or church must see that the new wine be put into new wineskins. It must follow the dynamic movement of the Spirit in ushering in new light, new life and new harmony. Our Lord Jesus harshly reproaches the Pharisees for pretending to be spiritual,

because their seeming spirituality of words and religious rituals does not cover up the fact that they "have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith" (Mt. 23:23). Jesus' criticism here is not directed at the Pharisees alone. It has uncovered God's profound revelation in Jesus through the Spirit, arousing in us a deep existential inquiry: what does it really mean for us to "be spiritual?" What is the true criterion by which we are guided by the Spirit and live in the Spirit of Christ?

As a Christian, one must follow the revealed light, life and harmony in Christ and pray honestly to God for the gift of the Spirit to illumine one's heart and soul, to disperse darkness and chaotic feelings as well as one's feelings of disenchantment with God's world and with history. It is essential for one to open to the Spirit who freely works in other Christians and other people in the world and to welcome any fruits which have been born of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit effects spiritual communication among people that we may appreciate each other's experiences and be illumined through this sharing.

A genuinely spiritual Christian has, as Jesus did, to maintain an inner harmony between his ideas and deeds, words and actions and between his love of God and love of his neighbor. He is supposed to be a living vehicle of the Spirit and in the Spirit to bring light, life and Christ-like values into the world. All those who belong to the spiritual realm share with Christ his unquenchable vigor and vitality in rendering service to God and humanity on earth. This manifestation of the life-power in service is itself a witness of a life renewed in Christ and empowered by the Spirit.

Under the guidance of the Spirit who is revealed in Jesus, one's life is in harmony with Jesus Christ and his Father. It is in this harmony, bathed in God's triune harmony, that God is truly revealed to us, since "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

The Christian church, which was founded by Christ in the power of the Spirit, is also a fruit of God's creation. Therefore, the church, at its very beginning, not only participated in light, life and harmony in Christ, but was also commissioned by God, in the power of the Spirit, to bring light, life and harmony on earth. Yet, in that dark era before liberation, the Chinese church was unable to renew its life in the Spirit because its Christ-like dignity and Chinese selfhood had been lost. This identity crisis caused the Chinese church to suffer from chronic anemia, its heart of flesh turning gradually to one of stone. The church became alienated from those Chinese people suffering with the living Christ and striving for light, life and harmony. The religious consciousness of the church was in the grip of a 'Latin Captivity' and the church itself was numb and indifferent to the people's struggles. The forces of light, life and harmony were breathed into the activity of liberation by the Spirit, but the Chinese church, unfortunately, was thrown into non-life, chaos and darkness. Obedience to God became a 'signboard' and only lip service was given to God and humanity. By so doing, the natural harmony between the church and Christ was spoiled. With the disruption of this spiritual harmony in Christ, the church was unable to distinguish life from death, being from non-being, light from darkness or harmony from chaos.

The Chinese Christian Three-Self Movement has been a life renewing movement for Chinese Christians, through which the Spirit freely breathed into the church unprecedented vigor and vitality. From this the Chinese church has gained life-giving self identity and has involved itself in the construction of a socialist new China. The Three-Self Movement is, in essence, a spiritual one because the movement itself is nothing other than a dynamic vehicle for the Holy Spirit to manifest itself and realize itself in China's soil through a new church seeking new light, new life and new harmony in Christ. The Three-Self Movement is an efficient facilitator for the gradual integration in and by the Spirit of a self-realized Chinese Christianity, melding a Western-developed religion with Chinese culture and ethos. This Christ-like inner harmony also finds expression in people-to-people relationships. The Three-Self Movement, though still immature, is in the making under the Spirit. It is a movement through which we encounter the movement of the Spirit, and through which the heart of flesh will grow spiritually and wholesomely into Christ.

Hence, every Christian in China pursuing a spiritual life has to ponder the meaning of being a participant in the Three-Self Movement in relationship to the meaning of being obedient to the guidance of the Spirit. It would be a mistake for one to take the Three-Self Movement as a slogan, a 'signboard' or a 'passing fad.' It is the Initiator Spirit who is continuing to strengthen us in bringing new light, new life and new harmony to the Three-Self Movement. The Christian Three-Self Movement in China today faces new challenges in the current nation-wide reform. As new wine cannot be put into old wineskins, the Three-Self Movement must forge ahead with renewed spirit and courage in the power of the Spirit of Christ. All faithful children of God in China should continue to open to the guidance of the Spirit, being "intoxicated" with the new wine granted to us from Christ in the process of the Three-Self Movement. Amen.

*Sermon preached at Nanjing Theological Seminary, Fall, 1986 upon Mr. Zhang's return from Toronto School of Theology where he received an M.Div. degree.
English text provided by Mr. Zhang Jinglong.*

17. Jacob Dreamed of a Ladder – Shen Cheng'en

Text: Genesis 28: 10-17

What attitude ought the Christian have towards the world and the things of the world?

A detached one, because the world is evil, and we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom and only sojourners in this world?

I do not plan to say much about the phrase "the world is evil" because the Bible clearly states that the world was created by God and belongs to God. Of course there is evil in the world, but this does not mean that the whole world is evil. Psalm 19 reads: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." Hymn no. 27 of the hymnal clearly states: "This is the heavenly Father's world."

Therefore, "as citizens of the heavenly kingdom and merely sojourners in this world," we should maintain an attitude of detachment towards the world, isn't that right?

Let us think about this for a moment together.

We are definitely citizens of a heavenly kingdom, and we look forward to a more beautiful home in heaven. In this way we can say we are sojourners or temporary residents in this world. The Christian faith also has a certain detached quality to it. However, if we think that because we believe in Christ we need not be concerned about, or can stand aloof from, the world and world affairs, then we are mistaken.

Let us turn to the Bible to find the answer.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis contain the account of the creation of the world and of man by God. God created all things in the world, and finally he created humankind.

Genesis 1:36-28 records these words: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion ... over every living thing..."

When God had created everything in the world, why then did he create humanity?

To appoint humanity as overseer. When God told humankind to be fruitful and multiply, he meant that humanity must propagate its species from generation to generation so that it would eventually fill the earth. It is not for a short time only that humanity is to be on earth, nor is it to dwell in just a small area. God told us to sink roots in this world. And to do what else? To have dominion over the world.

The world God created is not without its defects. This has nothing to do with a lack in God's power, but is due to God's appointment of humanity to have dominion over the world.

Thus humanity has responsibility for everything dwelling on earth and for the world God created. Humanity cannot treat the world indifferently, nor stand aloof from it.

In chapter 2 of Genesis we see Adam exercising his administrative powers: he gave names to the cattle and to the birds of the air.

In this chapter we see why God created Adam, and then created Eve.

The Lord Jehovah said: "I will make him a helper to fit him."

We can learn something from this, namely why God wanted humanity to be fruitful and multiply. God was saying that people should help each another in the task of governing the world. God did not make individuals; rather he created humankind. And humankind should be mutually helpful among themselves and have dominion over this world together.

Perhaps someone will say that God gave this charge to humankind before Adam sinned. After Adam sinned, humankind lost its qualifications.

In the chapters of Genesis about Noah we see that after God destroyed the world through a flood, God reiterated his charge to humankind in his words to Noah and his sons. The Lord Jehovah said: "I will never again curse the ground because of man ... neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

See, God will never again curse the ground. Not only does he not curse it, but he gives it a blessing.

Moreover, Genesis, chapter 9, verses 1-7, read: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered and you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly upon the earth and multiply it.'"

God desires that people work hard on earth. Humankind is to flourish and develop, bringing forth fruit in abundance. God's charge to Noah is a further development on his commission to Adam. To what degree is humankind to have dominion over the earth? To the degree of bearing fruit in abundance.

After Noah, humankind did another stupid thing, which is recorded in chapter 11 of Genesis. The people of those times discussed building a city and a tower. The top of the tower was to reach heaven, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth," they said.

God wanted humankind to be fruitful and multiply in this world, to fill the earth and to bring forth fruit in abundance. But the people of those days were unwilling to do this. They did not want to spread out over the whole earth; they wanted to go to heaven.

So God confused their speech and they could accomplish nothing together. They had no choice but to spread out over the whole earth.

God created the world, but he did not abandon it as being of no further concern to him. Jesus said, "My Father is working still." (John 5:17). Therefore we believe that God is the Lord of history.

God created the world and he loves the world he created. God desires that humankind flourish and develop in the world. The Lord Jesus prayed: I do not ask that you take them from the world, but that you keep them separated from the evil one.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray in this fashion: "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus wants us to pray for earthly matters.

We also pray that God's kingdom will come. Come where? To earth, of course. The book of Revelation tells us that someday the holy city, the New Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:1-2).

Of course the Bible also tells us that we are merely sojourners in this world. However there are various kinds of sojourners. There are tourists, and there are those on official business. Tourists do not necessarily have a responsibility for each place to which they travel. If you are on official business, then you have a definite responsibility. Shanghai has many offices for enterprises from other provinces. The workers in these offices are not only concerned about Shanghai's development, but contribute their efforts towards accomplishing it.

If you live temporarily in another person's home, you will most likely not be just a freeloader. Rather, you will be aware of the family's needs, and offer your help.

Up to this point can we say that we are denying the transcendent nature of our faith? No, definitely not!

Let us consider Jacob's experience as recorded in Genesis, chapter 28.

Jacob dreamed about a ladder which reached up to heaven. God wants humankind to be mindful of heavenly matters. However God did not tell Jacob to climb up to heaven rung by rung. On the contrary, God said: "The land on which you lie I will give to you." What God wants to give us is "earth," not "heaven."

Jacob woke up. He had undergone quite a spiritual experience. He exclaimed: "Jehovah was here and I really did not expect it. How terrifying is this place. This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven."

The ground upon which Jacob lay was really God's house and the gate of heaven!

Has anyone of us had a spiritual experience like Jacob's? God wants us to be like Jacob, to experience the transcendent while being in the midst of the world, to experience the light of heaven while on earth.

Everlasting life is not only something to be experienced in the future; it can be experienced right now. Although we live on earth, through our faith in the Lord, it is like living in heaven.

Where is God's kingdom? In heaven? Yes, but not entirely. Jesus once said: "The kingdom of God is within you," or "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). God's kingdom is on earth as well as in heaven.

We should not only place immanence and transcendence in opposition to one another. Rather, we should link the two together. Each one of us on "the land on which he lies" should experience "the house of God" and "the gate of heaven." While still living on earth we believers in the Lord can only really experience transcendence by entering into the world. This is because God is Emmanuel (God with us). He is in the midst of the world and in the midst of history.

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translated by Peter Barry, M.M.

18. On the Watchtower – Zhao Zhilian

Text: Habakkuk 2:1-2

I will take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me: "Write the vision; and make it plain upon the tablets, so he may run who reads it."

Reading the Old Testament we come across watchtowers and lookout towers. These were originally set up in the grape orchards or farmers' fields to watch over the livestock and produce, to guard against wild beasts and thieves (2Chron. 26:10). Later, watchtowers were also built on the heights of city walls as sentry posts, in order to keep watch and stand guard over the fortress. It is probably this type of watchtower which Habakkuk describes.

Yet, when we read the Bible, we can also see the watchtower in its historical, social and spiritual aspects. When the prophets of Old Testament times ascended the lookout or watchtower, they carried before God the heartfelt wishes of the people and there received God's message for the people. Thus these lookouts and watchtowers carry much spiritual light and learning for us. Let us consider three points concerning these verses from Habakkuk.

(1) Ascend the watchtower for contemplation, filled with concern for the fortunes and misfortunes of the people.

The history of the Hebrew people tells us that the prophet Habakkuk lived during the latter 7th century and early 6th century B.C. At that time, King Josiah of the southern kingdom of Judah had died in battle. The situation was quite different from that of ten and twenty years before when he had launched the religious reforms. His son Jehoahaz had been on the throne a mere three months when Jehoiakim, the elder brother, supported by Egypt, succeeded to the throne. Jehoiakim was subject to Egypt, an outside power, and became a tyrant to his own people. At that time also the rise of the New Babylon (the "Chaldeans" of the Book of Habakkuk), took place. They conquered Assyria and Egypt and invaded Judah. Thus the prophet Habakkuk saw "wrongs," "trouble," "destruction," and "violence." He saw that "justice goes forth perverted," saw thugs "mercilessly slaying nations." Faced with such a situation, as a prophet concerned about his country and his people, a powerful sense of justice made him burn with anxiety, and give voice to a slew of doubts. It was in order to seek answers to these doubts that he "took his stand to watch," and "stationed himself on the watchtower."

The lesson this has for us is that in order to ascend the watchtower, in order to stand back and see the whole picture, we must have broad vision and be concerned for many things. The saying, "If one wants to see greater distances, it is necessary to go up one more level," is a familiar one. We can 'go up' only if the desire to do so is present. To turn it around, standing high above things and where we can see greater distances will make us more broadminded. If

we care only about trivial matters, totting up each little gain and loss, it will not occur to us to take up our stand on the watchtower.

There are many such lessons in the Bible. Joseph in the Book of Genesis is a very good model. If he considered things from the ordinary point of view, as most people would, and thought only of how his elder brothers hurt him, he would not have been able to see his way clear and act as he did. But Joseph recalled that "God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive." And this shows that Joseph stood back and saw the larger picture, like the prophet Habakkuk on the watchtower, stationing himself to watch over everything taking place below.

In the history of our own people there are also a number of examples which can enlighten us here. In the late Ming Dynasty in southern China there was a group of intellectuals concerned about important national matters and social reform, who formed the Tonglin Party. They lectured, published treatises and did a great many things for their cause. They had a very famous couplet which goes: "Sounds of wind, rain and recitation are all within our hearing; affairs of the family, nation and world are all within our concern." As Chinese Christians of today, we must be servants of the God of the prophets and of tradition. In the same way, we must also be concerned for the nation, the world and of course, the church.

Our times are very different from those of Habakkuk. His was a country under invasion by a powerful enemy, the people were in poverty and the atmosphere brought about by the religious reforms had already dissipated. Today our country is on the road to strengthening itself and enriching the people. The reform is in ascendance throughout society. Today, out of our love for the church and our people, there are (as for Habakkuk) many things we must be concerned about, many things which we must contemplate. In our world today there is the further threat of nuclear war, the environmental crisis arising from pollution and other factors, along with the problems of world population and food supply. All these we Christians should be concerned for. In August of last year, some of our professors and classmates from the seminary along with friends from other religions, went to Africa to take part in the "World Conference on Religion and Peace." The two Chinese Christian bodies, the Three-Self Movement and the China Christian Council, also designated the second Sunday of January every year as "Pray for Peace Day." These actions also show we Christians are very concerned about important world matters. Looking again at our church, we have a situation today of "many crops waiting for harvest, but few workers." There are so many areas within the church which need opening up, developing and deepening, but personnel are so lacking. We should be even more concerned about this situation.

Entering into the world and caring for the people's welfare is a precious feature of our Chinese church. We must think frequently of the important concerns of the church, the nation, the world, explore and pursue them. Before we can stand above things and see great distances, before we can gain a macro vision, before we can take our stand on the watchtower like the prophet Habakkuk, we must rely more on prayer and Bible reading to communicate with God and heighten our spirituality.

(2) Seek God's revelation and message on the watchtower.

Anxious about the people's fortunes, Habakkuk raised his doubts, pondered earnestly, searched for answers. But he in no way used his own knowledge or intellect to replace the guidance of the Holy Spirit or the will of God. Rather, he prepared himself spiritually, and waiting sincerely upon the watchtower, he sought to understand "what Jehovah will say to me," seeking a message and revelation from God.

And he indeed received an answer from God: "the righteous shall live by his faith" (2:4). What an important message this is! In this faith, Habakkuk pronounced five curses on the Chaldeans, and praised God saying, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:18), and thereby passed difficult tests by means of this firm faith. Later the author of Hebrews thoroughly discussed the principles of Christian faith, a faith such as this, and moreover pointed especially to Jesus Christ as the originator and completer of our faith. Based on this message, Paul, in Romans and in Galatians, expounds the truth and doctrine of justification by faith, thereby breaking through narrow Jewish ethnocentricity, enabling the possibility of the development of a world-wide Christianity, and providing a doctrinal starting point for the religious reformation of Martin Luther in a later age, and eventually for the Chinese church Three-Self Movement. Thus the real significance of the revelation and message that the prophet Habakkuk received on the watchtower is not limited to his time only, but has a far-reaching and profound effect on the development of the church in history and the spiritual growth of believers throughout the ages.

Habakkuk has been called the "doubting prophet," as well as the "believing prophet." These seem to be contradictory, but if we consider them carefully, they are both correct. Habakkuk bore the mission of the prophet, he carried the people's questions, their perplexities, anxieties and thoughts before God beseeching, and thus gained the revelation and message of God for the people, and a clearer understanding of God's love. In this way, his faith was also strengthened, and its foundation made firm. The key to all this lay on the watchtower.

(3) Propagate well the revelation and message of God received on the watchtower.

The revelation and message from God gained on the watchtower is the result of spiritual seeking, but that is not the end of it. God's revelation and message must still be well propagated among the people. It must better and more broadly guide our spiritual practice. And this naturally leads us to think of those passages in the gospels dealing with Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain which are truly enrapturing. Peter says, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here." He simply does not want to go down the mountain. But later the road on which the Lord Jesus leads the disciples teaches us that we cannot simply yearn nostalgically for the beautiful scenery on the mountain, neglecting our work below.

The prophet Habakkuk received God's words on the watchtower, but this was not the end of the matter. God wanted him to "Write the vision, make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it." This is a request to speak and make God's revelation known to the people, and moreover, make it easily acceptable to them.

If we link this to our work of self-propagation, we will be illumined. God's script was a matter of inspiration, of vision, yet it must be "clearly" written. This requires us not only to learn to "analyze truth on the basis of the Bible," in order to allow God's words to "open up," to "show forth light," but also requires us to "write" within the context of our traditional culture that the people may understand. Today we Christians along with all our countrymen are busily engaged in the construction and creation of a better life. At the same time we all hunger and thirst spiritually. Thus, we must learn to improve all aspects of church work according to the actual conditions of our Chinese Christians, in order to fulfill the needs of our brothers and sisters. Taking church literature work as an example, it is worth considering how our brothers and sisters may gain light and vision from the truth we propagate, the witness we give, so that we may achieve what God wanted of Habakkuk: "so he may run who reads it;" so that it is even easier for our brothers and sisters to communicate in the spirit with God and with others.

This is only one aspect, but actually no matter which aspect of church work we speak of, we must rely on the guidance of the revelation and message received from God on the watchtower. It is there that we understand what God has entrusted to us; it is there that we understand the love and help of God, that we may further strengthen our faith and love, giving us a clear sense of direction that in a life of work and service we may never be found wanting.

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translated by Janice Wickeri

19. The Eleven Apostles – Tian Cong

"The Eleven Apostles" are only mentioned a total of three times in the New Testament: Matthew 28:16, Luke 24:9, and Acts 1:26; if the name list drawn up in Acts 1 is included, the number still is no more than four.

The Lord Jesus Christ originally had twelve apostles, among whom one (namely Judas Iscariot) betrayed and sold the Lord and turned aside from the way of the apostles (Acts 1:25), so that during this one brief period of time there were only eleven. This period, beginning from the night in which the Lord Jesus was sold, until the apostles chose Matthias to become one of them, was approximately forty days. Several important things that occurred during this time were: the Lord's suffering, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, his appearances to the apostles and to the multitude (see 1 Corinthians 15:4-8), his sending the apostles out to spread the Gospel, his promise to send the Holy Spirit, and his ascension. The time was short, but of the utmost importance, the utmost importance.

When we examine the tracks which the eleven apostles have left us from this specific time - an eternally unforgettable and crucial time - we can derive unlimited lessons. One phrase in verse 14 ultimately sums it all up: "with one heart and one mind."

"With one heart and one mind" is the summation of the life experience of the eleven apostles during these several days and their plan for the months and years to come; it is both a firm foundation and a beautiful image of the future. Only when Christ's body (the church) is "of one heart and one mind" will the Head of that church be satisfied. Paul urged the Corinthian church: "Be you united in the same mind and the same judgment. ...Is Christ divided?" (I Cor. 1:10-13).

The "one heart and one mind" of the eleven apostles is extraordinarily concrete. It is manifest in several ways:

(1) They did not reproach one another.

There was a sudden change in the situation as, one night, the Lord Jesus was taken away in the frightening glint and flash of cold steel and strong-hearted Peter unexpectedly denied the Lord three times (Mt. 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:54-62, and John 18:15-18, 25-27).

On a bright morning, the women, who had already seen the risen Lord, took this joyful news to the apostles, but the apostles who had so faithfully followed the Lord thought that they were talking nonsense and did not believe them at all (Luke 24:1-11).

On a quiet evening, the risen Lord appeared to the apostles, but when Thomas, who was not present at the time, heard, he still refused to believe (John 20:19-29).

Although the apostles loved and missed Jesus terribly, when once he arose from the dead and stood among them, they were startled and afraid (Luke 24:36-37).

And it was the same Simon Peter who, in the early morning by the Sea of Tiberius, saw the Lord Jesus but could not recognize him (John 21:1-14).

You see, if each of the disciples had seen themselves as the most spiritual, the most devout in their belief in the Lord, or the most faithful, wouldn't it have been quite possible for them to have many foundations for mutual distrust? Particularly Peter and Thomas? However, they were not like this. There was not one among them who looked down upon Thomas - Thomas who had at the time still not believed that the Lord had already risen. Nor did anyone reproach him at all. The Apostle John records these occurrences in objective, believable, and particularly impartial terms. And Peter not only never suffered reproach, he also remained deeply respected by all the apostles and became an important leader in the Jerusalem church.

Is it that the writers of the New Testament, in order to consider the situation as a whole, have intentionally avoided the subject? That is impossible. At that time that sort of thing did not occur. The Biblical writers were ones who under no circumstances avoided people's weaknesses.

To be of one heart and one mind certainly is not something which can only be put into practice after everyone is without reproach. Who can boast that they are one hundred percent correct and yet point fiercely at other people?

The apostles' "one heart and one mind" is a direct result of their heeding the new command which the Lord Jesus bestowed upon them that night on which he was sold, which was to love one another. (John 13:34) And just as Paul said: "Love is not boastful, nor arrogant...nor does it count the vices of others, (or in other words: "Do not keep in mind the mistakes of others"; I Cor. 13:4-5).

(2) They did not continue the debate over who was greatest.

In the hearts of the apostles, the question "Who is the greatest?" was constantly present.

They continually raised this question: "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (Mt. 18:1).

James, John, and their mother then stated their request directly to the Lord Jesus, that: "in your Kingdom, one may sit at your right side and one may sit at your left side" (Mt. 20:21).

As they were walking on the road to Capernaum, and the disciples "argued amongst themselves who was the greatest," it was still somewhat of a private discussion. But, after a period of days, as the rising wind forebode the coming storm, on the evening in which the Lord was sold, even at the banquet table, they were unable to see their perilous position and

publicly "began to dispute which one among them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24).

If this sort of spiritual condition was constantly influencing the apostles, then how could they be of one heart and one mind?

But one night, the flash and glitter of lanterns, torches, and weaponry and noise of voices broke up the apostles' absurd dispute. After the pervasive darkness of the second day, the rumble of the earthquake, the person of Jesus hung high on the cross of pain, the apostles were scrubbed clean of their contamination.

From this point on, the apostles did not discuss further who was the greatest.

Peter was at that time without doubt the leader of the Jerusalem church and had the most prestige among the apostles. In terms of "greatness" he was great. But to Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, Peter proclaimed: "No matter who they are, none should be called common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). And of the Gentiles who had accepted the Lord, Peter affirmingly said, "these people have received the Holy Spirit just as we have" (Acts 10:47). Afterwards, when Paul had arrived, Peter again spoke significant and profound words, saying, "The Holy Spirit was given to them just as it was to us. We shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, just as they will" (Acts 15:1-11), raising up equality twice in several very short sentences. We never again smell the odor of contention and striving for greatness.

The Apostle John was of a similar mind and in his old age wrote: "The pride of life, ...is not of the Father but of the world" (I John 2:16). Only when there are prideful people can there be dispute about who is greatest.

Only when people understand, and moreover, put into practice, a respect for others and do not think too highly of themselves, can they be of one heart and one mind. In our lives, there are discrepancies in the size and amount of our God-given abilities and our job-related income. But only when we do not argue over great and small can we then be of one heart and one mind and glorify the name of the Lord.

(3) They did not restrict themselves to their small circle.

According to the writings of Luke, "when they gathered together with Jesus," (Acts 1:4-6) this "they" only refers to the eleven apostles. And when in his speech Jesus said "you", (Acts 1:4,5,7,8) it was without exception referring to the eleven apostles.

However, the apostles by no means restricted this small circle to eleven people and it at least expanded to include "several women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus' brothers." They "all devoted themselves to prayer with one heart and one mind" (Acts 1:14).

As a matter of fact, outside of the ten or so people within this building, they maintained close relations with approximately 120 more people.

When the Holy Spirit descended upon and filled the apostles, this of course had a direct connection to the constant prayer and waiting with one heart and one mind of those within the house. However it inevitably involved the community of more than one hundred, as well. Because the name by which Luke addresses all these hundred or so participants in the community is "brother," which suggests that they were also believers in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Luke's narrative, when the apostles chose Matthias to join with the eleven, this solemn and serious affair was definitely carried out within this community of more than one hundred. Moreover, these one hundred or so brethren all participated in this work. (Acts 1:24 and 26 both have the word "everyone".) So we can see that "of one heart and one mind" actually included these one hundred or more brothers. At that time the counting of people usually overlooked women, so we can without a doubt assume that the number of people who participated in that community was not limited to one hundred and twenty.

From this we can see that the structure of "one heart and one mind" was two-layered.

Historically within the church there have always been people who preserve small circles of a few people, as if the smaller the circle the more spiritual. There is a tendency toward exclusion. But please listen to the words of Paul as he says: "Our mouth is open to you; our heart is wide. You are not restricted by us but you are restricted by your own narrow-heartedness" (2 Corinthians 6:11-12). Actually, is it not better if we can with one heart and one mind increase in numbers and richness? If everyone were of one heart and one mind and had an open heart would not that be far better than if everyone were of one heart and one mind and had a closed heart? If any are closed, are self-centered, and have hearts which can only follow their own will, what good offering can they make to God and what contribution to the people?

With their constant prayer and waiting with one heart and one mind, the Holy Spirit descended and filled them. And it is only with a clean heart, a heart emptied of self-affection and narrowness, that you can be of one heart and one mind with others.

It was just as the eleven apostles of that time were praying constantly with one heart and one mind that the Holy Spirit descended upon them and caused them to receive incomparable power that they might give active witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and establish the church. If the church of today wants to move forward it must also be like this. For this is what God requires of us.

Tian Feng, November, 1985, p. 8
translated by Kenneth J. Guest.

20. From the Beginning of the Year to the End of the Year – Tang Shoulin

Text: Deuteronomy 11:8-17; Psalm 121

What is the beginning of the year? What is the end of the year? New Year's Day is the beginning of the year; New Year's Eve is the end. The beginning of the year we call New Year's Day; the end New Year's Eve. In the Bible these two special dates are mentioned once. (Dent. 11:12) "...The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." Relying upon God's grace, I want to use this treasured passage for my sermon topic, especially pointing out its significance for us.

A Land Protected by God

First, we want to note that Jehovah God protected that land from beginning to end. What land? We all know it was ancient Canaan. Canaan Land had several special characteristics: 1.) It was chosen and created by God. Amidst all the beautiful land before God, he chose only Canaan, calling it "My Land" (Lev. 36:5). 2.) God gave Canaan Land to God's children to cultivate. 3.) Canaan Land was a piece of land especially blessed by God, as our sermon title says: "...The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." It flowed with milk and honey. In perfect timing, God sent the dew and spring and autumn rains, enabling the Land to produce abundant harvests, fresh wine and plentiful green grass for the livestock. The Land provided plentifully for all its inhabitants. 4.) Canaan was also the place where God revealed God's justice and compassionate love. The people of Canaan were the children of God. They wholeheartedly obeyed God's commandments and observed the tenants of the law, and in mind, heart, body and will, loved the Lord their God. As God poured out great mercy and love on the people of Canaan, the land gave forth fruitful harvest, enabling the people to share in an abundant lifestyle. But if the people disobeyed God's commandments and the law and departed from the true way, worshipping and serving other gods, then Jehovah's righteousness would be upheld, punishing the guilty, sending forth the anger of righteousness. In such a time "the skies are closed, no rain falls, the earth is unproductive." This was the case during the reign of Ahab. Ahab and Jezebel lured their people into worshipping Baal and no rain fell for three and a half years. The Canaanites were unrepentant and forsook God. God let their nation be conquered and they would become slaves in a foreign land and suffer persecution. This is a fact of history.

What I've pointed out so far are the four special characteristics of Canaan: A land chosen by God; a land given to God's children; a land greatly blessed by God; and a land where God's righteousness and love were manifested.

Canaan Land and Us

Dear readers, do you know what relationship the Old Testament Canaan has with today's New Testament apostles? Simply put, the Old Testament Canaan is the forerunner of what

we New Testament era people receive in Christ. The special characteristics of Canaan are also what we receive in Christ. Look: Canaan Land was chosen by God. Today, you and I are also chosen by God. Even before creation we were chosen by God. As the Holy Spirit tells us through the Apostle Paul: "Even as God chose us in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world..." (Eph. 1:4). Again, Canaan Land was the property of God's children. Today, we Christians are also God's handiwork. God sees us children as God's handiwork, just as Moses prayed, "For they are thy people and thy heritage, whom thou didst bring out by thy great power and by thy outstretched arm" (Deut. 9:29). To repeat, Canaan was greatly blessed for God's children, just as today God greatly blesses us. Through the salvation of God's crucified son Jesus we are delivered from sin, forgiven, reconciled with God, become God's children, in the name of Christ, receive eternal life and respect his position of high priest ...etcetera. I say "etcetera" because no one can fully explain the length, breadth, height and depth of God's love for us. God's love cannot be measured. What God gives us is exceedingly abundant, surpassing all we could ever ask. To repeat, Canaan is a symbol of God's righteousness and love. Today if we on earth can truly obey God's will, love, respect and be loyal to God, then we can receive God's grace and love. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year, God's eyes will always be upon us. On the other hand, if we intentionally waste God's grace, and dishonor the Lord's name after having received God's salvation, then God will deal with us justly, God will teach us a lesson and severely rebuke us. Dear readers, are you able to see? The Canaan Land experience was a foretaste of our lives today.

God's Protection Surpasses All

From the beginning to the year's end God is always caring for us. The Omnipotent Creator God always tenderly cares for us. How joyful, graceful, blessed and powerful this is! God's care is unsurpassable, surpassing any possible earthly human care or concern. I acknowledge that on earth the greatest love and care came from my mother. My father died when I was little and my mother reared me by herself. In her later years she preferred living in Suzhou rather than in Shanghai where I was working. Every time I went to Suzhou to visit her in her later years, she would begin talking before I even had a chance to greet her. When the weather turned cold, she would invariably stretch out her hands, gently stroke my clothes and say I wasn't wearing enough. Each time I gave her some money she would say: "Don't give me so much, you'll put yourself in difficult circumstances." I can say my mother loved and cared for me in every possible way. When I think again about God's love and care compared to my mother's, what can I say? It's simply impossible to compare. My mother couldn't be with me forever, she went to rest with the Lord twenty years ago. Even if she were still with me, she would be too old to help or understand me. She was eager and willing, but unable to help me. What about God's protection? God is all-knowing, because God's eyes are fixed upon us from beginning to end. As the Psalmist says: "He who keeps you will not slumber..." (*Psalm 121:3*). *God is ever-present, ever at our side, never to forsake us. The Psalmist said: "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and evermore" (Psalm 121:8).* No matter if we stay home, are on Shanghai's Nanjing road, in Hangzhou or Beijing, from start to finish, God is with us and will protect us. God is almighty. The Psalmist says: "The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life" (*Psalm 121:7*). It is a pity I haven't more time or space to prove my point.

For more than a half century I can count at least ten times God has saved me from the brink of danger. Let me briefly mention one experience. In 1937 when the Japanese invaded China my entire family was living in Nanjing. When the invaders attacked and occupied Suzhou and Wuxi, the nation's capital Nanjing was thrown into great confusion. Government offices, schools, important officials, vehicles and boats were moved successively to safety. But the ordinary people suffered greatly. Transportation was very tight. It was very difficult to purchase train or boat tickets. After waiting in line for two days and nights in the bitter cold, I was able to buy the last three tickets on the last bus from Nanjing to Hangzhou. I took my elderly mother, wife and two children with me. We first went to Hangzhou and then took refuge on Mt. Mogan.

We had not been at Mt. Mogan long when a small group of bandits robbed everyone taking refuge there. This was the first time in my life I had to face bandits. A small group of eight or nine bandits broke into my room and asked for money. I gave them all my cash and they snatched my wedding ring, watch, jewelry, etc. A few minutes later, along came a man whose appearance suggested he was the bandits' leader. Carrying a rifle, he asked for more money. I told him I didn't have a cent, that bandits had earlier taken all I had. But he said I must still have some money. He wouldn't believe otherwise. Then he aimed his rifle at my forehead and screamed he would shoot me if I didn't give him some money. Then I bowed my head, closed my eyes and prayed to God. "God, If my work here on earth is completed, then receive my soul tonight. If there is still work awaiting me, then please save me from the barrel of that bandit's gun." After praying, I still had my eyes closed awaiting the final "ping" sound of the rifle, but I heard nothing. A few minutes later I opened my eyes. He again pressed the muzzle to my head urging me to give him money. Suddenly he shouted at me: "Don't you think you can get out of this by wasting time. I could make you give much more money, but that would be worse than death." Speaking, he turned around thinking to steal my two-year old daughter from my mother's arms. My mother held the baby tightly and cried: "Jesus save us. Jesus save us." Then I saw the bandit was wresting my child from my mother. I tried to stop him. He hit me in the chest with the rifle butt and I fell down. Amidst this extremely dangerous situation I heard sirens all around me. At first it was hard to tell how many sirens there were. Later there were more and more. It was difficult to tell how many were police (later someone told me the siren was a signal for the bandits to leave). The bandit leader shouted: "Cheap for you!" and led the other bandits away.

After they left, I struggled up from the ground, unbuttoned my shirt and saw my chest was bruised. I was hurt and knew it was a serious injury.

The next morning, a doctor who was one of the refugees came on his own to see me. He examined my bruise saying: "You're lucky. If the rifle butt had struck a little further over, you could have died. An injury there would have caused you to spit up a lot of blood and then you would probably have died. When I sought refuge here at Mt. Mogan, I hurriedly brought some medical books and medicine. It seems I brought them for you...." I took his medicine and my health was soon restored. My body felt relaxed and down to this day the pain has never returned. Why? People said I was lucky. But I clearly understand this was God's doing. God protected me from death. Truly, "Even though I walk through the valley of

the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Not only has Almighty God protected me in the past, God protects me in the present, and will in the future from the beginning of the year to the end. Year after year God continuously protects and cares for us. Just as the Psalmist says: God will protect you "now and forever."

God Protects Us in Every Way

In what follows, we are still looking to see how God protects us. We want to look a little more concretely. From first to last, what does God want to protect for us? What good things does God want to give us? Here, I want to lift up four important blessings:

(1) Peace - Dear readers, isn't it true we all need peace in our daily lives, especially at the beginning of a new year? We all hope to have a peaceful and joyful year ahead. Because we all need peace, God is pleased to bestow it on us. Many times the Bible speaks of "A God of Peace." For example: "The God of Peace be with you all" (Rom. 15:33). Recall that before his crucifixion, the Lord comforted his disciples saying: "Peace I leave with you." Having spoken, he felt he needed to say more so he continued: "My peace I give to you" (Jn. 14:27). Again on the night of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were gathered together behind a closed door. Suddenly the Lord appeared in their midst. The first words he spoke were "Peace to you." Having spoken, he then showed the disciples the nail imprint in his hands and the bruises on his body. He continued speaking to them: "...Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn. 20:21). Here Jesus spoke "peace" twice.

The first was the peace of salvation, because Jesus wanted the disciples to see the nail imprints and bruises. Both were proof of Jesus' crucifixion and proof of salvation through the Cross. With this proof, all apostles can receive the peace of salvation. We can become reconciled with God, we can become God's children; our sins can be forgiven. We no longer need be controlled or menaced by sin. We're at peace.

The second peace is peace of work. The Father sent the Son, the Son also sends us. Basically, work (or we can say service to God) depends upon loyalty and obedience. If our service is in complete accord with God's will, and we follow the teachings of Christ, we need not fear difficulty or suffering. Then the Lord will assuredly give us peace of work. But that doesn't mean we will be at peace 365 days of the year or that we can live comfortably each day. Sometimes things will be rough, we will suffer misfortune or attacked by Satan. But the Lord will give us sufficient strength grace.

(2) Happiness - Let us see that the second important blessing God wants to give modern day Canaanites (Christians) is happiness. Peace and happiness were originally linked together. Paul said: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace..." (Rom 15:13). The happiness God gives and the happiness between people are completely different. Earthly happiness is external and can be readily taken away. It's conditioned by our environment. Human happiness can be lost, taken from us. It's also conditioned by our environment. If things run smoothly there's happiness. If not there's chaos. But the happiness God bestows is completely different. It comes from within. It cannot be lost or taken by force.

God's servants Paul and Silas are good examples. Once in Phillipi they were publicly severely beaten, dragged before a magistrate and thrown into an inner prison with their feet bound in chains. In such a situation, how could they be happy? They could have insisted they were innocent, complained about their dilemma and felt depressed. However they didn't. Because the happiness God gave them was from within. They were not influenced by their outer situation. In the middle of the night they were singing, praying and praising God. Everyone knows the ending of this story. Wouldn't we all like to receive this kind of happiness from God all year round? Really, it's not difficult. If we keep in constant and close contact with God and recall all the love and grace God has given us, we will certainly be steeped in this heavenly happiness.

(3) Victory - The third protection God gives us is victory. In addition to peace and happiness, God also gives us victory to overcome weakness of the flesh, temptation from sin, and defeat from Satan's advances. Paul trusted the Lord's strength to overcome his own weaknesses. Jesus promised him saying: "...My power is made perfect in weakness." Because of this Paul boasted even more about his weaknesses, knowing Jesus' power rested upon him (2 Cor. 12:9). God still wants us to overcome the temptation of sin. Through Paul, God reminds us that we have already been crucified with Christ. When he died, we too died. The death Jesus died he died to sin. Our deaths are the same so that sin will no longer have dominion over us (Rom. 6:8-11). Today if someone takes a lot of paper money to a hospital morgue, they're giving money to a dead body. The corpse cannot smile or express any appreciation. It will still look scary. Its hands will not reach out for the money. It will be stiff. Why? Because the person has already died and there is no attraction in the money.

Dear readers, when we are crucified with Christ, we all die to sin. Sin and sin's temptation cannot order us around. God also enables us to triumph over Satan's advances. In God's presence Satan continuously seeks to tempt us, but relying upon the precious blood of the Lamb we defeat him. Satan accuses us of sin, but where is there salvation in sin! We can tell Satan the blood of the Lamb has already been poured over us and saved us from our sins. Satan's accusations and threats are useless. "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony..." (Rev. 12:11). That to which we attest is the Word of God, God's power to overcome Satan - just as three times in the wilderness our Lord overcame the devil's temptations.

(4) Bearing Fruit - The fourth characteristic of God's protecting us from beginning to end is bearing fruit. We all know Canaan produced grapes, olives, figs, grains and other lovely fruit. What is fruit? Fruit is the culmination of a tree's fulfillment. It is an over-flowing of the tree's productivity. This is the fruit of a tree. When a Christian's life is fully matured, it will also overflow. A kindly spoken word is fruit. Action taken to assist others is fruit. Leading people to Christ is fruit. One's words of praise are "the fruit of lips" (Heb. 13:15). The fruit Christians bear has two functions: 1.) To give praise to God. Jesus told the disciples: "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit" (Jn. 15:8). 2.) Fruit enables people to eat their fill. Readers, did we bear any fruit last year? I'm afraid not. If so, it was very little. Let us ask God in the new year to cover over our embarrassing lack of past fruit. Pray God to

give us greater rest and nourishment, greater provisions for life so we can bear more fruit for God's glory.

What I've said above about peace, happiness, victory and bearing more fruit are all special characteristics of Canaan Land. When God's children live in Canaan, heed God's word, obey God's will, give their all to love God, God will grant Canaan Land peace, happiness, victory and more fruit. Dear readers, if God is with us in our daily lives there will be peace. If we stay with God and keep communicating closely with God, there will be happiness. In God's power, there is victory. Where God provides for life, we will bear more fruit. Perhaps some may think, it is not easy for us to receive the blessings of Canaan Land today; it is easier said than done. I tell you that is the thinking of the ten spies. Such thinking is unacceptable. Before the Israelites moved to Canaan, twelve spies were sent to explore the land. Ten returned with bad news saying: "It is impossible, we cannot move there. The city walls are strong and fortified and the people are strong, we seemed like grasshoppers before them." Caleb and Joshua, who believed the opposite said: "Let us go up at once and occupy the land; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30). We all know how this story ends. The people listened to the ten spies' negative report and dared not enter Canaan. They wandered in the wilderness for forty years and their generation all died in the wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb led the younger generation into Canaan. Dear readers, if in our minds we think we cannot live the life of Canaan Land, then we are just like the ten spies. Let us refuse and revile them. We can receive the blessings of a Canaan Land lifestyle. If we will only love and obey God, then God will protect us and bless us from the beginning of the year to the end.

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