

# Chinese Theological Review: Volume 13

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## From the Editor

Beginning with his Preface to the first issue, the Chinese Theological Review has carried numerous offerings from the pen of Bishop K.H. Ting, past President of the China Christian Council and Chairperson of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China. We are especially pleased then to present in this issue ten essays and sermons from the 1980s and 90s not previously available in English. These are taken from the forthcoming volume, *The Selected Writings of Bishop K.H. Ting*, which will be published in China in both Chinese and English versions, the Chinese version in October, 1998, and the English version shortly after. This is a substantial selection of Bishop Ting's writings, chosen by him, and with an introduction by Rev. Chen Zemin. The range of topics covering several decades will give readers both a portrait of the man, as a theologian, Christian educator and church leader, and an in-depth picture of the problems and challenges the church in China faces. The essays grouped under the heading of "Interpreting Religion and Religious Freedom under Socialism," show K.H. Ting in a role not often appreciated outside China—that of a public figure, a delegate to the National People's Congress, with the standing and access to advocate religious interests at the highest levels. These essays and lectures show how he has worked to broaden government cadres' understanding of religion and religious freedom in ways that increase the space for religious belief and activities in society. The essays under "Talks on Theology and the Church" deal with issues facing the church itself, placed within a larger context of a call to greater unity, tolerance and reconciliation among Christians. The section concludes with three sermons.

Among the authors whose work is included in this issue. K.H. Ting, Chen Zemin and Wang Weifan are senior theologians familiar to readers of this Review. We are pleased also to include a number of younger theologians and pastors, both men and, like Gao Ying and Sun Meici, women. They and their contemporaries are the future of the church in China and their writings will continue to find a place in these pages.

Two essays in this issue continue the exploration of the relationship of Christianity and Chinese culture and the possibilities of new Christian expression through that culture. Wang Weifan discusses the influence of traditional culture on the shape of Chinese theological thinking while Wang Jingo uses traditional symbols in a new way to reinterpret Christian concepts and move toward a new synthesis.

The church in China is growing most rapidly in the countryside. A young pastor from Anhui describes the development of the rural church and its problems, including heresy and superstitious practices as well as the resurgence of denominationalism. At the same time, intellectuals' interest in religion and in Christianity in particular has never been greater. Chen Zemin explores the history of Chinese intellectuals' reactions to Christianity and urges the church to develop Intellectuals strength within itself in order to reach out to engage intellectuals on their own ground. The challenges facing a church in a rapidly changing society, both positive and negative, are examined by Chen Xida, while Sun Meici reflects theologically unity in the church, an ongoing concern for a church which realized union in 1958, but is still on the road to unity.

Finally, as the General Assembly of the World Council Churches prepares to meet in Harare, we include two essays on China and the church ecumenical. Chen Zemin sets out the story of the Chinese Church's relationship to ecumenical movements and organizations and Gao Ying, after a year's internship with the WCC, tells what she has learned and how that organization appears to a Chinese pastor and teacher.

As always, thanks are due to the authors of the essays and sermons that appear here, for allowing their work to be shared through translation. I would also like to thank the translators, Donald Snow, Ewing Carroll and Ian Groves. Some essays were received from China in draft translation and I would like to thank those translators, whose names I do not know, as well. I would also like to thank the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia for its continued support and Dr. Marvin Hoff and Mrs. Joanne Hoff for their kindness and support.

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## Chinese Traditional Culture and its Influence On Chinese Theological Reflection - Wang Weifan

Bishop K.H. Ting has said, "The Word becoming flesh needed to be born of Mary as mother."<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Chinese theology needs to be born of Chinese culture as its mother. In my understanding, what Bishop Ting is saying is that the birth and development of Chinese theology needs the cultivation and nurture of Chinese Culture.

When God's revelation and the Christian gospel enter a particular culture, these need to be embodied within that culture. This is because people who have been nurtured by a particular culture try to understand and interpret revelation and the gospel through their own idioms, through philosophical, religious, ethical and other notions found in their own particular culture. Being firmly rooted in Chinese soil over a long history of more than five thousand years, our culture has been able to take foreign cultures into itself and make them its own. Conversely, because of its deep-rootedness, this Chinese culture is difficult for other cultures to assimilate. Zen (Chan) Buddhism in China is no longer the same as that which came from India and the number of Christians in China has never exceeded 6% of the total population. The example of Buddhism indicates that any religion that wants to take root in China must adapt itself to Chinese characteristics, while the example of Christianity shows the almost unimaginable difficulty of fitting Christianity into the Chinese cultural framework.

Christianity first came to China with the Nestorians in the 7th century during the Tang dynasty. The Yelikewen (a Mongolian term for Christians, apparently derived from the Hebrew Elohim) entered China during the Mongol Yuan dynasty of the 13th and 14th centuries. Both these expressions of Christianity originated in the Eastern Church and left us some material (though scarce) for theological reflection. Catholicism was brought by Matteo Ricci during the Ming and Chinese scholar-officials like Paul Xu Guanggi (1562-1633) and Michael Yang Tingyun (1557-1627) wrote theological articles which at the time were referred to as studies of heaven. Protestant Christianity followed in the 19th century. Yet, for all this, China's own theologians did not appear until after the May Fourth Movement in 1919.

If we were to summarize theological thinking in China since the Tang dynasty, we could say that by and large, no theologian was unmarked by Chinese culture. Understandably, some complemented the culture, especially in the question of original sin and salvation. My paper will attempt to introduce how Chinese traditional culture influenced Chinese theological reflection. I will consider four points:

Unceasing generation (*sheng-sheng*) and eternal return (*guifan*) *Sheng-sheng* is dynamic generation that is unceasing, a concept taken from the *Yi Jing* (Book of Change), the earliest Chinese classic.<sup>2</sup> Some of the contents and resources for this book originated

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<sup>1</sup> In Preface to Wang Weifan, *Chinese Theology and Its Cultural Sources*.

<sup>2</sup> *Yi jing, xi chi*, Chapter 5. "Ever-generating change of Yi."

with the emperor Zhou Wenwang, three thousand years ago. Its cosmology is found in the "Formation of Creation" which says, "In *yi* there is the *tai ji* (supreme ultimate). From that sprang forth two poles; from the two poles there were the four forms; and from the four forms came the eight trigrams.<sup>3</sup> And lastly, there was the myriad of all things. When the monk Jing<sup>4</sup> wrote the text for the Nestorian Monument (erected 781 CE), he ingeniously incorporated this theory of the formation of creation and explained God's creation in the idiom of Chinese culture, giving it theological explanation of the mighty acts of God and creation:

- God used the Chinese ideogram for the number ten, which looks like a cross and can easily be divided into four spaces, to signify the cross.
- God stirred the winds of life, separating them into two *qi* (energy), the *yin* and the *yang*.
- God rotated light and darkness, separating heaven and earth.
- God made the sun and the moon to circle each other, thus forming day and night.
- After creating the myriad of things, God created the first human being.

An article written by the *Yelikewen* contains a further development of the concept of God as "an ever-generating God."<sup>5</sup> Out of the chaos came order, with the sun and moon revolving and the rotation of day and night. The dynamic movements of the revolving sun and moon resonated with that of the life of flourishing human beings—all of which movements testify to the "unceasing generation" of a living and dynamic God.

Since God is ever-generating, human beings should therefore worship God. With God's help, humans can strive for unceasing self-transformation and great achievements. The great Mongolian emperors began their correspondence with the following sentence: "O the great power of the ever-creating God!" The Yuan emperor Gui You (r. 1246-1248) wrote a letter to the Pope in Rome in 1247 in which he said, "We devote ourselves to serve God, and by God's power ... we are only human beings. But for the help of God, how else can we succeed?"

According to the Nestorian Monument created beings are originally honest, humble and innocent, without evil desires. But because of deception and tempting by Satan, humans have gone astray. Therefore the death and resurrection of Christ is for humankind to create a new path and destroy death. This effort of Christ in humans is to complete God's work of creation. To be Christians, we should "according to the principle of *ren* (human-heartedness; benevolence), help others." But this *ren* differs from the *ren* of Confucianism, which means human relationships through human kindness and love. Instead, it is the *ren* of the *Yi jing*, which is the seed of grasses, trees and fruits. This seed is the very source of life. The theological assumption of Nestorian Christians is that all good works and virtues are meant to help people live and to live a better life.

Therefore, God is an ever-generating God who creates and sustains life and Christ is

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Chapter 11

<sup>4</sup> A Syrian monk born in China, well versed in the Chinese classics.

<sup>5</sup> An article on the temple of Zhen Jian, written by Liang Xiang of the Han dynasty.

an invitation to life through the destruction of death, making life more complete and full. Christians are dependent upon the power of heaven for self-transformation and also to protect life. This is the theological reflection of Christians living in the Tang and Yuan dynasties, arrived at with the influence of Chinese traditional culture: an ever-generating God, firmly rooted in the Chinese notion of "unceasing generation."

In traditional Chinese culture there is a wholesome spirit of unceasing generation, yet there is also a deep sentiment of attachment "not forgetting one's roots." Reciprocity contains a strong emphasis on this idea of "returning to one's roots." The idea of "returning" (to one's origin) is in itself a strong emphasis in the culture.

Another Chinese classic is the *Li ji*, a collection of the sayings of Confucius regarding rites or rituals. Confucius defined *Li* thus:

Li is not forgetting one's origin. The ancient sage said, When a fox dies, its head is always facing the hill to which it can no longer return.

According to the *Li ji*, all things originate with heaven and human beings originate from their ancestors. This means that the source of all things is the great nature. People's roots are in their forefathers. And the greater source of all these is God.

When we offer sacrifice to God in the wilderness, the importance of this act is its reciprocity and gratitude towards one's origin. Returning to one's source therefore is of utter importance.

It is not easy to explain why it is necessary to make food offerings to God (as in Lev. 3: 16; 21: 6). But the *Li ji* tells us:

When we offer food to God, we are returning to God. It is only by turning towards God that one very naturally makes offering to God.

When we read the five books of Moses, it is difficult to understand why God is pleased to accept the fragrance of our offerings (Gen. 8:21). This fragrance of offerings is called *yan* in the Rites of Zhilou:

Another meaning of *yan* is a sincere heart.

Through *yan* we give offering to the God most high. So our offering is to return to God our sincere heart.

This seeking to return to God is a longing homesickness that is shared by both ancient and contemporary people. In some ways this longing is even more severe in contemporary than in ancient people. Several years ago a Chinese scholar identified the dilemma of contemporary people as a sense of homelessness, which lies in the lack of balance, harmony and peace of spirit. Another scholar, surveying Chinese university students, found that young people today are searching for a spiritual home. Bishop K.H.

Ting has quoted the poet Tao Yuanming (365-427) in this regard, "My garden is deserted, why do I not return?" He went on to draw out the meaning for today: "Today many people feel lost in the spiritual sense. They want to find a place where they can feel loved and where they themselves can love, but they do not know where this place is." This homestead is available under the cross. It is that dwelling place from generation to generation. The problem is that people so tired and weary from life's journey do not know how to return. I have described this situation in my "Ode to Return":

Earth is filled with thorns; blood is shed.  
In the wilderness the good shepherd is seeking;  
Longingly at the door the loving father waits.  
Amid the shadows of the mountains  
Do wandering white clouds know where to go?  
Deep in the ravine of the hills  
Does the fatigued bird know where to return?  
Even at the very edge of the ocean  
The setting sun knows where it is headed.  
The lost sheep is still wandering;  
Why does it not return?

(1988)

Steadfast action and sincere devotion. Traditional Chinese culture places strong emphasis on concrete action. All scholarship has to be manifested in steadfast action<sup>6</sup>, and must be an integral part of being human. This is a cultural characteristic which is even reflected in the translation of the Bible. Early Missionaries like Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China in 1807, translated *logos* as *yan* (word). Later it was translated as *dao*, "the Way." There are roughly two reasons for this change: 1) Lao Tzu had said that the *Dao* is before the creation of heaven and earth (chapter 25) and is everlasting and transcending time and space. Chuang Tzu said that *Dao* is without limits or boundaries, and *yan* is not everlasting, therefore it has its limits (chapter 2). In the Han language, the word *Dao* means a road, a path that one can walk on. It also means rules and regulations and can mean speaking or sayings, but this is not its main meaning.

According to the scholar Xie Fuya (1892-1992), the Hebrews are a people of faith, while the Greeks and other Westerners are people of knowing, but the Chinese are a people of action. "For more than 1800 years, the West has used the method of knowledge to prove the faith, and has created a glorious, illuminating Christian theology. Yet, in our manifesting faith in action, we should be able to create a Chinese Christian civilization."<sup>7</sup>

Jia Yuming (1880-1964) went a step further by integrating knowledge and action. "What I believe is what I know; what I know is what I believe and also what I do. With actual experience I will know what I believe and do what I know."<sup>8</sup>

"But the good works or actions advocated by Christian faith are not merely ethical

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<sup>6</sup> This idea is found in the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

<sup>7</sup> "Christianity and Culture", and "A Collection of Christian Thoughts in My Late Years."

<sup>8</sup> The Study of Theology.

virtues. They are the very sacred fruits of a life saturated by the truth, filled with the Holy Spirit and radiating the fragrance of Jesus Christ."<sup>9</sup> What is required is the inner cultivation of one's spirituality: Attention is on the spirit reborn, sanctified, resulting in the nurture and growth of the inner person. How we cultivate and concretize the inner spiritual energy (*qi*) is the strength of Chinese Christianity and a much-needed characteristic for the church in China.<sup>10</sup>

In addition we need to address the problem of a transcendent God who saves us (on earth). T.C. Chao (Zhao Zichen; 1888-1979) said, "The salvation of humankind comes only from God who is the initiator, from above to below, of a heavenly grace and revelation that is through the word made flesh."<sup>11</sup> Bishop Ting again: "Between the concrete realities of the human morality and the highest aspirations hoped for there exists an unbridgeable chasm ... Such an unfortunate situation, attributable to human nature, is rightly regarded as 'sin' by Christian faith. Human beings cannot depend on themselves, but will have to depend on God's salvation to free themselves from this captivity ... The change in social system (in China) has not eliminated this condition of spiritual poverty."<sup>12</sup>

We have already mentioned how Jia Yuming advocated the cultivation of the inner heart. This we can trace back to the neo-Confucian philosophy of the Song and Ming dynasties. According to Wang Yangming (1472-1528), "A myriad of things with their principles is not far from the heart and mind of humans." For knowledge in "essence is in the heart and the mind." He also said, "When a tree is planted, the root is the heart of the tree."

In China there are many Christians who pay much attention to the inner spiritual journey. By this sacred path they come close to God. T.C. Chao once said, "How can there be real religion, if humans do not come close to God?"

According to Chinese tradition, steadfast action and sincere devotion are two complementary, not contradictory, manifestations. On this point, Xie Fuya said, "The inner spiritual strength of a person can be cultivated to the point of communing with the cosmos and even integrating with it. By so doing, the person will gain support and strength from this great cosmic union." And the person would have courage to withstand hell or high water, willing to be immersed in the fallen world in order to rescue the lives of millions. "Forgetting self and dedicating oneself to the spirit of the great cosmos with little self-interest or self-gain, a person's inner self would be pulsating with that of the cosmos. In non-attachment, everything becomes secondary success, fame, power, prestige, profit-even to the point where one's physical body is no longer regarded as one's own. This state reached in selflessness is sometimes referred to in the philosophy of religion as 'otherworldliness.' But this otherworldliness is not negative, it is not emptiness. Instead it is so positive that one is ready to leap into the bitter sea to rescue

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Interpreting Christianity.

<sup>12</sup> "Theological Mass Movement in China"



those who need rescuing."

Everlasting Spirit and Universal Love. Traditional Chinese culture includes a search for an ideal and independent human characteristic. Mencius refers to this characteristic as an eternal spirit. This spirit is "not weakened by prosperity, it is unshaken by poverty and unbent by power or violence." T.C. Chao said the same thing in theological terms. "This quest for a higher spirit on the part of human beings is based on the fact that they are created by God. We are the object of God's love and we are God's progeny. We are made in the image of God, therefore we have this characteristic."<sup>13</sup>

Contemporary intellectuals concerned with this traditional Chinese quest for higher human characteristics invariably were attracted to Christianity precisely because they saw these characteristics in the person of Jesus. One of the earliest Chinese Marxists, Chen Duxiu (1880-1942), pointed out, "We should internalize the great characteristics of Jesus and his profound concern for humanity and make these genetically a part of our own inheritance."<sup>14</sup> "What Chen Duxiu understood to be Jesus' superior characteristics and concern were the latter's spirit of sacrifice, forgiveness, equality and universal love. Wu Leichuan, the first Chinese president of Yanjing University, pointed out, on the eve of the outbreak of war with Japan, that Christianity can nurture the leadership needed in China today and that people who can imitate Christ and his superior character can transform society."<sup>15</sup>

Y.T. Wu (Wu Yaozong; 1893-1979) accepted Christ as savior because he was moved by the great character of Jesus. That was in 1917. After World War II, however, Wu said, "only a progressive and revolutionary Christianity can truly manifest the spirit of Jesus Christ. The mission of Christianity today is to transform a society that enslaves and makes tools out of human beings into a society that fully respects the worth of every human being."<sup>16</sup> Even before this, Y.T. Wu had written many articles and spoken out many times from the biblical and personal faith perspective, despite threats to his own life. He criticized the political corruption and moral decadence of the Chinese society of his day.

Deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture, the theology of T.C. Chao shows the close link between the everlasting spirit and universal love. For him, the supreme character of God is that of prime mover and motivating force of the ever-changing cosmos, forever renewing and creating. The motivating force is not a blind force, but one led by love and moving towards love. God made humans in God's image. Therefore, people also have this characteristic of growing towards love and being driven by love.<sup>17</sup>

In ancient China it was the philosopher Mo Tzu (478-376 BCE) who spoke about love. "How do we know that God loves all people on earth? Because God lets the sun

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<sup>13</sup> Christian Theology.

<sup>14</sup> In "Christianity and the Chinese People," in *New Youth* February, 1920.

<sup>15</sup> Christianity and Chinese Culture.

<sup>16</sup> The Mission of Christianity," in *Tian Feng*, August 10, 1946. Edited translation.

<sup>17</sup> Christian Philosophy

shine on everyone, giving all people life and feeding them." Nurtured by traditional Chinese culture, it is very easy for Chinese people to understand Jesus' words about "making the sun to shine on both the good and the evil, and the rain to fall on both as well" (Mt. 5: 45).

In the Chinese Church today there is a tendency to limit God's love to the confines of the community of faith. Therefore it is necessary for the church to address the question of love or universal love from a theological perspective. On this point, Bishop Ting has said, "Our starting point is God's love, or the God who loves. This love of God is compelled to create, to educate, to forgive, to save, to sanctify so that more and more people can find this source of love."<sup>18</sup> In Bishop Ting's theology, God is not only the fountain of love that created all things, but the home of love to which all things eventually return. In all of human history, we are in God's love that leads us, keeps us, accepts us and reigns over us. This shift in theological reflection (from source to dynamism), is closer to traditional Chinese thinking which emphasizes the activating and inclusive nature of universal love.

Edited Translation.

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<sup>18</sup> "Life Should Have a Mission."

## ***Imago Dei* and Yin-Yang Philosophy: A Theological Reflection on the Relationship between Man and Woman - Wang Jianguo**

Of the many issues Chinese Christians face in witnessing to the gospel in China, I would like to mention two. First, the use of the Chinese language in interpreting the Gospel in order to make it understandable for Chinese people. This means we must find a way in which Christianity is no longer regarded as an imported and alienated religion, but as one which is compatible with the ethos of Chinese culture. Second, to enable the gospel to contribute to the renewal of Chinese culture and to become part of that culture. Chinese culture has been in decline since the beginning of this century; a rash of political movements, especially the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), almost destroyed it. In recent years, the reconstruction of Chinese culture has become a prominent subject in the academic arena. If Christianity cannot contribute to, or become involved in, the reconstruction of the culture, it will be an alienated element of the new culture and will eventually be rejected once more.

With these two issues in mind, this paper attempts to use yin-yang theory, a traditional Chinese philosophical concept, to understand the *Imago Dei*. The *Imago Dei* is then used as an *Imago Christi* to reflect upon how the *yin-yang* philosophy has been distorted historically in dealing with the relationship between man and woman. Obviously, I cannot deal with such a large topic in this short paper and will thus focus on the relationship between male and female.

### 1. Basic understanding of the *yin-yang* philosophy

The Chinese term *yang* originally meant "sun," or what pertains to sun and light; *yin* meant the absence of the sun, i.e. shadow or darkness. It is believed that the *yin-yang* theory was present in the *hot'tu* (river map) from which the *Yi jing* (Book of Change) is thought to be derived.<sup>1</sup>

*Yin-yang* philosophy has dominated Chinese cosmological speculation down to recent times. In this Chinese worldview, *yin* and *yang*, two great and opposing forces, are believed to fill the universe-world harmony depends upon their interplay. *Yin* is associated with femininity, passivity, coldness, darkness, wetness, softness, earth and the moon; *yang* is connected to masculinity, activity, heat, brightness, dryness, hardness, heaven and the sun. The Chinese do not judge one of these forces better or worse than the other; the interaction between them is simply the way that the universe operates.

This cosmology views human beings as part of, not the center of, the world. In other

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<sup>1</sup> The *Yi jing* is an ancient Chinese document which represents the primordial ethos and thinking of the Chinese. It is to Chinese philosophy what Plato is to Western philosophy. Cf. Fung Yu-Ian, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1948), 139-9 and also Jung Young Lee, *The Theology of Change* (Markyknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), 1-9.

words, anthropology is a subsidiary of cosmology. The human being is a microcosm of the cosmos. It is therefore not sufficient to understand humanity merely by studying oneself. According to Chinese tradition, heaven represents the father; the earth represents the mother; humankind are their children.<sup>2</sup> Obviously we cannot entirely understand anthropology without an understanding of cosmology. The study of humankind must be put in relationship with the cosmos. Human beings are not isolated beings but beings in relationship with the universe.

The two forces which fill the universe, *yin* and *yang*, are represented in society by man and woman respectively. Moreover, each contains the two elements within itself as well; in modern language, masculine and feminine, anima and animus.

What then is the relationship between the *yin* and the *yang*? Put simply, it is non-dualistic, relational and complementary.<sup>3</sup> First, *yin* and *yang* are non-dualistic; opposite in character but not antithetical because each includes the other. *Yin* is *yin*, not *yang*; *yang* is not *yin*. But *yin* is included in *yang* and *yang* in *yin*. This can be seen in the symbol of the *Tai ji* (the Great Ultimate), which expresses the inclusivity of *yin* and *yang*. *Yin*, or the dark, has a light dot within it and *yang*, or the light, has a dark dot. *Yin* and *yang* are different but not mutually antagonistic. Rather, they embrace each other. Secondly, *yin* and *yang* are relational. Both are essentially active forces of change. *Yang* cannot act independently of *yin* nor *yin* independently of *yang*. *Yin* cannot exist by itself; it exists only in relationship with *yang*. The *yin-yang* relationship stresses relationship over existence. In other words, individual being is in relationship with the other. *Yin* exists because of *yang* and vice versa. Neither exists by itself. *Yin* and *yang* are always together; they form a basic communal unit, always in relationship. Thirdly, *yin* and *yang* are complementary; they are opposite but also fulfill each other. The *yin-yang* relationship is not one of conflicting dualism, but of complementary "dualism." *Yin* and *yang* are mutually complementary for the sake of the whole. *Yin* does not fight its opposite and win by eliminating it, because the opposite is essentially part of the self. To eliminate the opposite would be to eliminate oneself. *Yin* is incomplete; it must be completed by *yang*. This, too, is indicated in the *Tai ji*, in which *yin* and *yang* flow into each other and together make up the whole.

The fact that anthropology is part of cosmology helps us to understand the relationship between God and humans. The non-dualistic, relational and complementary relationship between *yin* and *yang* helps us to understand the relationship between man and woman. This leads to my next point.

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<sup>2</sup> The Chinese philosopher C hang Tai (1020-1077), writes in his Western Inscription, "Ch'ien (qian) [the first of the 64 hexagrams in the Yi jing which symbolizes heaven] is called the father, and K'un (kun) [second of the hexagrams which symbolizes earth] the mother. We, these tiny beings, are commingled in the midst of them. I, therefore, am the substance that lies within the confines of Heaven and Earth, and my nature is that of the (two) commanders, Heaven and Earth." Cf. Fung Yu-Ian, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Princeton University Press, 1959), 493.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jung Young Lee, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* (Nashville: Ahingdon Press, 1996), 21-49.

## 2. The *Imago Dei* in light of the *yin-yang* relationship

From a Christian perspective, the relationship between man and woman can be understood only in relationship with God. In order to understand this relationship, we need to go back to the creation story in Genesis, where God said, "Let us make humankind in his image; in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them" (Gen. 1: 26-27). To be sure, the concept of the image of God here is foundational in understanding the relationship between God and humans, man and woman. Although there are a variety of interpretations for the phrase "the image of God," these may generally be divided into two categories: substantial and relational.<sup>4</sup> In this paper I prefer to interpret the "image of God" as human life in relationship with God and with other creatures, including, of course, the relationship between male and female.

According to the priestly creation narrative in Genesis, "God created humankind in his image" is followed by "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1: 27). It is clear that human beings created by God are in relationship with God their creator and with their fellow human beings, male or female. To be human is to be in such a relationship. This relationality mirrors the very being of God who lives eternally in community.

God is a triune God. God said, "Let us make humankind in our image." The terms "us" and "our" state a communal unit and reveal that "God Himself" exists in relationship and not in isolation.<sup>5</sup> "God is not by him/herself alone: there is communion and loving *koinoma* in the Godhead. God eternally lives as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In God's own eternal being there is movement, life, personal relationship and the giving and receiving of love."<sup>6</sup> The triune God, three persons in one and one in three persons, reveals to us that the Trinitarian persons in the Godhead are not self-isolated subjects. "In

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<sup>4</sup> All interpretations of the Image of God may be thus categorized. Substantialist asserts that the image and likeness means capacity, reason, quality of a physical resemblance to God, original excellence of freedom, power of dominion over the earth, etc.,... . Relational argues that the image of God means relationship, which is the essence of human nature and vocation. Cf. Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Eerdmans, 1991), 120-122; Douglass 1. Hall, *Imaging God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1986), 89-107. Although I take the "relational approach" in this paper, I do not deny the substantialist approach altogether. This is because of the situation in which I live and the heritage of the Confucian tradition, in which anthropology is founded upon the assumption of the difference between animals and humans, who have *si duan* (four fonts or beginnings, or four feelings), such as the font of love or commiseration, or righteousness or shame, of proper behavior or modesty and of wisdom, a sense of right and wrong. Cf. Fang Yu-Ian, *Short History*, pp. 68-70; Paul V. Martinson, "Imagining the Human through Culture, Religions, Christ," *Word and World*, vol. X, no. 4 (Fall, 1990), 330-338 and Tu Wei ming, "Confucianism" in *Our Religions*, ed. Arvind Sharma (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 158.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatic* III/4, 117.

<sup>6</sup> Migliore, 68.

God, 'persons' are relational realities and defined by inter-subjectivity, shared consciousness, faithful relationship and the mutual giving and receiving of love."<sup>7</sup> The three persons of the Trinity depend on each other, having their distinctive identity only in relationship with each other. They live in loving community.

Turning to the *yin-yang* symbol, we may say that in the Godhead, the Great Ultimate, *yin* and *yang* are in perfect balance. God its Father-Son as *yang* and the Holy Spirit as *yin* (Sophia, feminine)<sup>8</sup> are in the unity of difference and the difference of the united. As *yin* and *yang* embrace each other, so do the three persons of the trinity. Yin is not only *yin* but also *yang*; *yang* is not only *yang* but *yin* as well. *Yin* is always *yin* and *yang*, just as *yang* is *yang* and *yin*, for they are inclusive of each other. As *yin* and *yang* are in a complementary relationality, the Godhead is in the perfect and deepest loving relationship. The Father would not be the Father without the Son and the Holy Spirit and vice versa for each of the others. God is the one who in utter freedom from all eternity expresses Godself in love in the sense that God gives God's very self always in the begetting of the Son. As the perfect expression of the Father's self as outpouring love, the Son proclaims and witnesses this love in that he surrenders himself to this love and acknowledges his true "self" as the glorification of the loving Father. The relationship of the Father as Begetter and the Son as Begotten is mutual surrender, "being for the other."<sup>9</sup> By the same token, the Holy Spirit is in the deepest willingness to be the "humblest person in the Godhead. She is very frequently quite unrecognized because she works 'anonymously' among us and in the world."<sup>10</sup> The Spirit is anonymous because of her essential *yin* character. God as Holy Spirit "anonymously" nourishes the Father-Son's love in the world. She is patient even to the point of suffering in order to allow us the freedom of our conscious response. In the Godhead, she surrenders herself to Father and Son, "being for the other" as well.

God is a triune God, who lives in the deepest loving community. This community-based image of God has been bestowed on man and woman, who are created by God. Hence, man and woman are capable of, and obligated to, living in community. As anthropology is part of cosmology in Chinese tradition, the Christian understanding of the relationship between male and female is always in the light of the triune God, because our humanness and creatureliness mirror the image of God. "That is, human beings are created for life in the relationship that mirrors or corresponds to God's own life in relationship."<sup>11</sup>

Based on this confession, we come to know that the relationship between male and female should be understood in terms of that in the Godhead, that is, interdependence, inclusivity and complementarity to one another.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 68

<sup>8</sup> "Sec Jung Young Lee, "Holy Spirit as Yin," in *The Theology of Change*, 50, 110.

<sup>9</sup> " Hans Urs Von lialthasar. See *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians*, eds. Donald W. Musser & Joseph L. Price (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Norman Pittenger, *God in Process* (London: SCM Press, 1967) 40. See also Jung Young Lee, *The Theology of Change*, 110.

<sup>11</sup> Mighore, 122

In the image of God, first of all, it is revealed to us that human beings are created as male or female.<sup>12</sup> As *yin* is different from *yang*, so male is different from female. But just as *yin* and *yang* do, male and female co-exist. Barth points out "humanity, the characteristic and essential mode of man's being, is in its root fellow-humanity. Humanity which is not fellow-humanity is inhumanity."<sup>13</sup> Understanding of humanity is not simply an understanding of masculine nature, because just as *yin* and *yang* do, male and female interact, interplay and interweave, not only in the social sense but also in the psychological sense.

*Yin* and *yang* co-exist. *Yin* is not *yang* and *yang* is not *yin*. They are opposite in existence, but not antagonistic in essence because both male and female are created by God, who lives in the perfect balance of *yin* and *yang*. It is obvious that *yin* and *yang* are equally important in the Great Ultimate, as in the Godhead. *Yin* is neither inferior nor superior to *yang*. *Yang* is neither inferior nor superior to *yin*. It is true that the Bible does say that woman is created as helper to man, but that does not mean woman is inferior to man, because the Bible also views God as the divine helper of people.<sup>14</sup> God creates male and female equally. Each of them possesses an inalienable dignity.

However, equality does not mean sameness. We should not diminish sexual differentiation. *Yang* is *yang* and *yin*, not just *yin*; *yin* is *yin* and *yang* and not just *yang*. Denying sexual difference reduces the richness of our human experience and impoverishes our lives spiritually. God creates human beings as male or female, so that humans may have a deeper and richer understanding of God and themselves.

Yet when we talk about sexual differentiation, we have to recognize that there is not an impassable chasm between male and female in terms of understanding each other. *Yin* is *yin* and not *yang*, but *yin* is in *yang*; *yang* is *yang* and not *yin*, but *yang* is in *yin*. Carl Jung seemed to be aware of this inclusive principle when he pointed out that there is the "anima," the psychological woman, in man, just as there is the "animus," the psychological man, in woman. Man has woman-generating elements and woman has man-generating elements.<sup>15</sup> This psychological study helps us to understand that male

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<sup>12</sup> It is interesting that being created in the "image of God" is related to being created "male and female." John R. Sachs says, "God has no gender." See his book, *The Christian Vision n/ Humanity* (The Liturgical Press, 1991), 18. His speculation seems flat. When we talk about God's gender there are several possibilities at least: God is both male and female, neither male nor female, and either male or female. In Gen. I : 27, it seems that God is not only the negation of all gender, but also the affirmation of all gender. In the symbolic language of yin-yang, we may say God is both male and female. See Jung Young Lee, "God as male and female," in *The Theology n/ Change*, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 111/4, 117

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Exodus 18: 4, Deul. 33:29; Psahns 33:20, 70:5, 115:9, 10, 11 . See Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles o./Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Servant Books, 1980), 30.

<sup>15</sup> See Carl C. Jung, *The Integration of Personality* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Turbner & Co., 1940), 19. See also Jung Young Lee, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective*, 28

and female embrace each other, as do *yin* and *yang*. This embracing of male and female mirrors the embracing of the three persons of the trinity. This is the image of God in which human beings are created as male and female.

The second aspect of the relationship between male and female in the light of the *Imago Dei* is that human beings are created as man and woman. This means that to be human is to be-in-relation, and to be-with. *Yin* (woman) exists because of *yang* (man), and *yang* (man) exists because of *yin* (woman). "Woman came from man, so man comes through woman" (I Cor. 11:12). Neither *yin* nor *yang* exists by itself. *Yin* and *yang* are always together. Their existence is based on their relationship. As discussed above, *yin* and *yang* are not two independent entities; they are not only two but also one at the same time. Here one's relation to another is also one's relation to the whole. Man and woman co-exist in relation to each other and in their co-existence each of them experiences and becomes himself and herself. Without manhood, womanhood does not exist; womanhood would mean nothing without manhood. Womanhood and manhood form humanhood, as *yin* and *yang* constitute the Great Ultimate. No individual man or woman knows completely and with assurance what it is to be of the other sex; to know what it is to be of one's own sex is always in relation to the other.

As *yin* and *yang* are interdependent, male and female have to accept this given relationship of interdependence, because in it each discovers what it is to be man or woman. Perry Yoder notes that the description "bone of my bone" and "flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2: 23) binds man and woman together in both might (bone) and frailty (flesh). This description-together with v. 24, in which man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife - emphasizes the interdependence of male and female.<sup>16</sup> In *yin-yang* symbols, *yin* and *yang* interact so that *yin* becomes *yin* without excluding *yang*, and *yang* becomes *yang* without excluding *yin*. In interaction, they find their own roles in the whole. Likewise, woman is dependent on man, as man is dependent on woman (1 Cor. 11:17). In this interdependence, they find who they are. This interdependence is also demonstrated in the three persons of the Trinity.

The *yin-yang* philosophy helps the Chinese not only to understand the necessity of mutuality and interdependence, but also of complementarity in the relationship between male and female. As discussed above, *yin* and *yang* are opposites, but also fulfill each other. The two are not in conflict; rather they complement each other. *Yin* is complete in *yang* and *yang* in *yin*, because the symbol of completeness or wholeness is the harmony of *yin* and *yang* - the Great Ultimate. Likewise, man and woman fulfill each other. In and through the opposite, each moves toward completeness or wholeness. This is the goal for which we are created in the image of God. God is not a static being, but a loving process of mutual self-surrendering love of the three persons in the Godhead.<sup>17</sup> In the *yin-yang* symbol, the Great Ultimate is the unchangeable change. That is, *yin-yang* is inclusive of both the changing and the unchanging simultaneously. Change always operates in the bipolar relationship of *yin* and *yang*. As the unchangeable change, God is both being and

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<sup>16</sup> Perry Yoder, "Woman's Place in the Creation Accounts," in *Stud v Guide on Woman*, ed., Herta Funk (Newton, KN: Faith and Life Press, 1975), 10-14.

<sup>17</sup> See Migliore 71



becoming, because God, like the *Tai ji*, which means movement in stillness and stillness in movement, is both *yin* (rest, being, responsiveness) and *yang* (movement, becoming, creativity).<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between man and woman is not a static state but open to the future. God is in a loving process, as is the relationship of man and woman, because what manhood and womanhood really are is a mystery, constituted not only by the mystery of otherness, but also by the openness of man and woman to the future. Sachs asserts that "the mystery of the sexually other human is a symbol of the absolute mystery of God's otherness and of our relatedness to and transcendence towards God as our final personal wholeness and fulfillment."<sup>19</sup> As *yin* and *yang* fulfill and complement each other, man and woman are on the way of finding and realizing their completeness and wholeness in engaging in God's loving process of becoming. This is the harmony toward which *yin* and *yang* move, a harmony that Paul describes as "the fullness of time," "all things in Him" (Eph. 1:10). Just as humanity is not a static state, but a process towards God, the relationship of man and woman is not a rigid state either, but a process in which the newness of that relationship can be found in engaging in the process of God's being and becoming. In the present, man and woman complete each other in a fulfillment of life not yet realized.

### 3. The *yin-yang* philosophy in light of the *Imago Dei*

From the discussion above, we may say that the *yin-yang* philosophy, primarily set down in the *Yi Jing*, may help the Chinese to understand the *Imago Dei* in dealing with the relationship between man and woman, a relationship that is inclusive, interdependent and complementary. This ought to be the case. However, life is not yet what it ought to be. The Chinese have failed to put the *yin-yang* theory into action correctly in dealing with the relationship of male to female.

From the culture, it can be demonstrated that historically in China, the *yin-yang* theory was developed into a socio-philosophy in which cosmology was pulled down into sociopolitical ideology. This ideology legalized feudal patriarchy: the husband represented heaven (*qian*) and the wife represented earth (*kun*); man was *yang* and woman was *yin*; *yang* was superior to *yin* and *yin* inferior to *yang*. This philosophy of the gender relationship dominated in China for two thousand years. Although today few Chinese still hold to this philosophy in their understanding of the gender relationship, the impact of its rhetoric still haunts the Chinese psyche. Man takes superiority over woman for granted; many women are willing to accept the role that views woman as subsidiary, as housekeepers. This gender relationship needs to be changed. The Gospel is the best

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<sup>18</sup> Jung Young Lee points out that in a very generalized way there are three characteristic forms of theological thinking: (1) the theology of the absolute: that the concept of unchanging being characterizes the Ultimate, or God; (2) the theology of process in which becoming is ultimate and God is the process of becoming; and (3) the theology of Change that encompasses both "being" and -becoming- as the ultimate character of reality. See his book *The Theology of Change*, 19-20.

<sup>19</sup> Sachs, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, 20.

transforming power to accomplish this. In what follows, I will sketch the contours of this socio-philosophy and then reflect on how the concept of the Imago Dei can inspire Chinese in the construction of a new culture.

There are few indications of the yin-yang idea in the early works of Confucianism. It was Dong Zhongshu of the Han dynasty (202 BCE - 220 CE), a Confucian philosopher, who first formally introduced the *yin-yang* theory into Confucian philosophy. He contended that the way of heaven honors yang and debases *yin*. In human affairs, man is venerated and woman is debased; the husband is *yang* and the wife is *yin*. *Yin* is dependent on yang. A husband may be poor, but he is still *yang*. A woman may be noble, but she is still inferior. Regardless of any imbalance that may exist between the two, Dong felt that *yin* is dispensable as long as *yang* thrives. He did not see *yin* and *yang* as compensating each other. Rather, he made a connection between natural calamities and *yin*, asserting that such occurrences are caused by the inferior (*yin*) rebelling against the superior (*yang*).<sup>20</sup> In the view of such a philosophy, woman is associated with yin and tends to be regarded as a symbol of evil and destruction.

In the Song dynasty (960-1279), many scholars viewed yin as representing evil. Cai Xiang, for example, asserted that earthquake, eclipse, hurricane, dimness in daytime and conflagration were all related to *yin-yang*. "All these occurred because *yang* did not win over *yin*. *Yang* represents rulership and *yin* represents subjects, barbarians and woman."<sup>21</sup> The most outstanding neo-Confucian scholar, Zhu Xi (1130-1200), also held a negative view of *yin* (woman). "Goodness and evil may be used to describe *yin-yang*, and may also be used to describe man and woman." "Between heaven and earth there is no reason for the co-existence (of *yin* and *yang*). Either *yin* wins out over *yang* or *yang* wins out over *yin*."<sup>22</sup>

This description makes it clear that classical *yin-yang* theory was completely distorted. More interestingly, when Western missionaries came to China bringing the idea of equality between man and woman during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, the more conservative Chinese scholars attacked the idea using the "heavenly way" of *yin* and *yang*. For example, Shen Dongsheng criticized the Western custom of suppressing the *yang* element by advocating equality between men and women: "Heaven is superior and earth inferior. Ever since heaven and earth were separated, the status of male and female elements was set ... Now the Western custom supports *yin* and suppresses *yang*."<sup>23</sup> Obviously, instead of liberating woman from hierarchical bondage, the *yin-yang* theory became the shackle on woman's liberty.

More sadly, in the history of China, suppressed by the male-dominated culture, few women dared to address their equality with men, let alone their complementarity. True,

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Pao Chia-lin, "Yin-yang Thought and the Status of Women," in *Confucian-Christian Encounters in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, ed. Peter K.H. Lee (The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 314-338.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

since the Chinese Communist Party came to power, the lordship of man over woman was abolished officially. Mao said, "women hold up half the sky." During the Maoist period, women were encouraged to compete with men, to do whatever men could do, even to dressing in men's clothing and wearing their hair short like men's. Instead of being thus liberated, women were actually totally masculinized. Since the so-called liberation of women wits merely an imitation of male behavior, women were in fact still enslaved to men's experience. The relationship between woman and man was again distorted. True womanhood was still being repressed. In the *yin-yang* symbol, *yin* still has not found its distinctiveness in relation to *yang* and to the whole. It is no longer fashionable for women to dress in men's clothing or to have their hair cut like men. But man's lordship over woman is still hidden in the people's mentality. Looking at the historical distortion of *yin-yang* philosophy in dealing with man and woman, we come to realize that in a world of finitude and sin, the vocation of man and woman to live in right relationship still remains a destiny we hope for and work toward. The Christian understanding of the concept of *Imago Dei* as an *Imago Christi* may renew or regenerate the Chinese concept of *yin-yang* as a means to deepen and broaden their understanding of the gender relationship.

Today Christian theology tends to interpret the *Imago Dei* as an *Imago Christi*. It asserts that the understanding of the *Imago Dei* in Christian theology cannot be confined to an exegesis of the first chapter of Genesis because Jesus Christ is the fullest expression of the *Imago Dei*. Jesus Christ is the "image of God" (2 Cor. 1:15).<sup>24</sup> From a Christian perspective, the *Imago Dei* as an *Imago Christi* convinces that the life, ministry and death of Jesus of Nazareth reveal what it means to image God.

God is a loving community. God hopes that human beings live in a loving community too. Without love, there is no community. The only way for a community to be established is love, the divine love that is revealed in Jesus Christ and characterized by self-giving. The classical *yin-yang* theory may help us to understand the relationship of man and woman, but it cannot generate love, because *yin* and *yang* are only symbols of the cosmic forces. *Yin* and *yang* are apathetic *per se*. They do not have passion for the world. When this *yin-yang* theory was used as a socio-philosophy which legitimized the patriarchal structure of society, it was not only unable to generate love, but also served as an instrument suppressing the growth of loving relationships between men and women. Why does classical *yin-yang* theory fall into a rigid socio-philosophy, which repressed women and distorted gender relationships? Of many reasons, one is striking: there is no personal loving power that can reveal to people what true love is, and empower them to live out that love. In a Christian understanding, that personal loving power is the God who reveals Him/Herself in Jesus Christ.

God is not an uncompassionate force of the cosmos. God is the triune God who lives in loving community. This character of God is manifest in Jesus Christ. God loves the world so that God as the Son came to the world and identified with people. Not only did the Son identify with people, but was also located among us and suffered with and for us on the cross. The Son embodied the divine love that is the foundation for building

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<sup>24</sup> Migliore, 122-123.

community. Due to the fact that there is no place for a loving God in the yin-yang theory, a God who defines love as well as showing it on the cross, people tend to define love in the *yin- yang* theory in terms of the will-to-power. The weak merely follow the definition set by the power-holder. Male may enslave female in the name of "love." In this way, the gender relationship was distorted.

Indeed, it is undeniable that the Christian message has served as an instrument for silencing woman's voice and rights in the West as well. But it is also the Christian message that enlightens women and men to pursue true womanhood and manhood.<sup>25</sup> When the Christian message or the concept of God is rigidified and idolized, that loving God is still the resource that inspires people to move beyond that "message" and that "God." This is because Christians know that the God who created male and female cannot be boxed in by human philosophy, ideology or category, and because the God revealed in Jesus Christ who died on the cross shows that God's love is for all human beings, not just males. It is crystal clear that this is not the case in yin-yang theory. The yin-yang symbol does not have such a passion and consciousness of criticism.

God is the triune God who lives in eternal loving community. Hence, male and female need to image God in establishing a loving community in which they embrace each other, trust each other equally and complete each other.<sup>26</sup> From a Christian perspective, this loving community is epitomized in God's household.<sup>27</sup> Jesus says that whoever does the will of God is his mother, sister and brother (Mk. 3:45; Mt. 5:45). Jesus is telling us that sisterhood or brotherhood is not the result of inclination or nature, but rather of being children of God. Those who are "brothers" and "sisters" are precisely those who do God's will.<sup>28</sup> In God's household, God as the Son became our brother. He exemplified Himself as a servant washing the feet of others. Instead of the will-to-power, self-giving power in God's household became the bedrock of brotherhood and sisterhood. God's love is self-giving love. This love is always relational, mutual and reciprocal. Without the sister, brotherhood means nothing, and vice versa. Brotherhood is always manifest in relation to sisterhood. In this relationship, God's household can be established. In yin-yang as socio-philosophy, woman became a symbol of evil. The relationship between man and woman was not based on self-giving love, but on male self-centered love. Without a God who cares, loves and suffers for us, men exalt themselves to be semi-god(s) to justify their domination over women. Instead of the will of God, man's will became the will woman had to accept.

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<sup>25</sup> Mary Steward Van Leeuwen, ed., *After Eden* (W. Eerdmans, 1993), 28ff.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.31,ii & iii. Aquinas asserts that love is a reciprocal in *heesio* and *ecstasis* the background for which is Pseudo- Dionysius' account of divine love as *ecstasy*, being-in-the-other. Aquinas stresses that this is the love to which the believer must be assimilated.

<sup>27</sup> Here, God's household does not mean simply the church. It is more than the church. Whoever does the will of God is of this family. This is a spiritual family. It may exist outside the church as well.

<sup>28</sup> E.S. Gerstenberger & W. Schrage, *Woman and Man* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1980), 151 ff.

In God's household, the sinful domination of men over women is overcome. Women are restored to full dignity. In his ministry, Christ acted contrary to his culture, displaying full acceptance of woman's humanity. Moreover, women became part of Jesus' ministry. They helped Jesus and supported Jesus in many ways (e.g., Lk. 8:3). They became friends of Jesus (e.g., Jn. 15:14). Their distinctiveness as females was not eliminated; rather they played a distinctive role in Jesus' ministry (e.g., Jn. 12:1 ff). God creates human beings as male and female. In God's family, God does not want females to be masculinized or males to be feminized. God wants each to find their "self" in relationship with others.

As mentioned above, due to the fact that we live in a world of finitude and sin, we have not altogether discovered what it means to be man and woman. We are on the way to finding "self." Jesus Christ has not finished his ministry. He is on the way to finishing it. This is why he will come again. He is on the way to Parousia. As his brothers and sisters, we are on the way to finding our sisterhood and brotherhood as well. In this sense, men and women need to complete each other in engaging the process towards the coming of the Parousia. God is being as well as Becoming, and so is Jesus Christ. As children of God, we are man or woman as well as becoming "man" and "woman."

In short, male and female image God most profoundly when their relationship reflects the equality, mutuality, love and complementarity that are essential to the Trinitarian God.

Indeed, this paper is not actually about the yin-yang theory and the Imago Dei. It is about the relationship of man and woman in light of yin-yang philosophy and the Imago Dei. It aims to find a way in which the Christian message may be more easily understood, as well as to make a contribution to the renewal of Chinese Culture. I have no clear idea how this may be done, but there are two aspects of it which I hold constantly in consideration: allowing Chinese to understand the Gospel in language familiar to them; and allowing the transforming power of the Gospel to penetrate into the culture. This has informed my discussion of the male-female relationship here.

Edited translation.

## The Church's Approach to Intellectuals - Chen Zemin

On the stage of human cultural history, intellectuals have always occupied a central position. "Cultured people" have synthesized folk culture with elite culture ("higher culture"), removing the dross and keeping the essence. They have provided the theories of culture, rationalized, systematized and preserved it for posterity. In short, the five thousand year history of China is itself a record of how intellectuals have synthesized the culture.

### I. History in Retrospect:

#### *The Posture of Chinese Intellectuals Toward Religion*

Influence of Confucianism. Though it has not been formed as a religion in the metaphysical sense, the notion of respecting heaven (ghosts and gods) in Confucianism has been closely tied to religious ethics, with a time-honored influence that is deeply engrained in the hearts and minds of the people. Thus for Chinese Han culture, Confucianism has provided a broad but thin layer of religious foundation. In the Han dynasty, Dong Zhongshu spoke of the reciprocity between heaven and humans, imbuing Confucianism with a strong religious dimension. However, the fundamental basis of Confucianism is rationality, with a heavy emphasis on human relationships and pragmatic, concrete social matters. ("Respect spirits and gods, but distance oneself from them." "If one cannot serve humans adequately, why concern oneself with spirits; if we cannot fathom life, why focus on death?" "Humans will conquer heaven.") The attitude of most intellectuals toward religion was recognition and tolerance, perhaps a sense of mystery, but never tended toward extremes or over-zealousness. Confucianism has always interacted and mutually penetrated with Buddhism and Taoism, resulting in some form of incorporation of these into itself, such as the sense of mysticism which entered Confucianism during the Han and Wei dynasties and the synthesized neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming, the "three religions in one." All of these have had great influence on Chinese intellectuals. Confirmed atheists among scholars (such as Wang Chong, Fan Zhen, Liu Zhongyuan and Huang Zhongxi) were in the minority. They were mainly opposed to the superstitious practices of the common people, but the influence of these scholars was minimal and never really penetrated to the lives of the masses.

#### Intellectuals and the Spread of the Major Religions in China.

Taoism arose in the mid Eastern Han dynasty, spreading among the people at the grassroots. After the Wei and Jin period, intellectuals augmented its spread. Kou Qianzhi and Ge Hong of the Eastern Jin and Tao Hongjing in the Tang processed and elevated Taoism, introducing it into the upper stratum of Chinese society. Taoism flourished in the Tang and took center stage among the three religions (Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism), spreading throughout China. During the Song dynasty, Zhang Junfang compiled a Tao Collection of more than five thousand volumes, but part of this has been lost. At the grassroots level, Taoism became a popular religion with an emphasis on

health, wealth and longevity.

Buddhism came to China in the Han dynasty (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE). It attracted few followers at first, but after intellectuals translated the Buddhist scriptures during the Wei, Jin and Tang dynasties, Buddhism was successfully synthesized with Chinese culture. It rapidly became the common religion among the majority of the Chinese people and many different sects developed. The Tian Tai of Zhi Yi, the San Lun of Ji Zang, the Fa Xiang sect of Xuan Zang, the Pure Land sect of Shan Dao and the Zen (Chan) of Shen Xiu and Hui Neng, as well as the Hua Yan sect of Fazang, the Mi sect of Hui Guo and the Lu sect of Dao Xuan—all are authentically Chinese (sinicized) Buddhism, widespread among both intellectuals and the common people of China. Their influence is no less than that of Confucianism. Contemporary thinkers such as Kang Youwei, Tan Zhidong, Zhang Taiyan and Liang Qichao were all influenced by Buddhism.

Islam came to China in the Kaiyuan era of the Tang (mid-7th c. CE). Its influence was not strong in the beginning, but by the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) a saying had grown up that "The Islam of the Yuan is everywhere in China." It was to be found mainly in ten ethnic minority regions. In the late Ming and early Qing, some intellectuals such as Wang Tai and Ma Zhu (Muslim scholars) were using Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist culture to explain Islam. For example, they used the notion of "illustrious virtue" of Cheng Yi and Zhi Xi and the Buddha "nature" from Buddhism to supplement the concept of "*Yi Ma Na*" ("true gift"). They also made use of the Confucian "*ti-yong*" and "*Thong-mao*" (filiality) to supplement their Islamic doctrines. In this way, Islamic teachings incorporated Chinese traditions and took root in China.

Christianity entered China several times. Nestorianism was originally a "heretical" sect that flourished in 6th century Persia. In the 7th century (Tang dynasty) the Syrian missionary Alopen brought the religion to China along the Silk Road, arriving in Chang An [present-day Xian], the Tang imperial capital. Under Emperor Tai Zhong, the policy of openness and tolerance was widespread. Nestorian temples were established in "a hundred provinces" throughout north China. According to the Nestorian Monument, erected 781 CE, and documents discovered in the Dunhuang caves, Nestorianism apparently made use of Buddhist terminology and spread among the people by "riding on the coattails" of Buddhism. Nestorianism, however, never established itself among China's intellectuals. When Emperor Wuzhong (845 CE) banned Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity fell with it and became almost extinct in central China.

Yelikewen is a general term that includes both a later entry of Nestorianism and European Christianity entering China during the Yuan dynasty. It came to the people with the support of the Yuan rulers, but was always regarded as a minor sect. However, when the Yuan dynasty met its demise, Yelikewen fell too. One of the main reasons why this religion never gained widespread influence in China was that it never gained the sympathy and support of Chinese intellectuals.

Catholicism arrived during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci made use of Western science to break through to China. He also made use of

Confucianism to reach the intellectuals, people like Xu Guangxi, Li Zhizao, Wu Yusan, etc., and gained a foothold through them. Later, however, the Pope supported the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries who opposed what they perceived to be the Jesuits' facile respect for and policy of over-accommodating themselves to Chinese culture. In the Rites Controversy that followed, Emperor Kangxi banned the Catholic missionary enterprise in China and thus an opportunity to spread the gospel was lost.

Protestant Christianity came to China in the early 19th century (1807). At first it spread among the poor and common folk and no effort was made to attract intellectuals. It did not understand or respect Chinese culture and even rejected it. Christianity this time entered China through the use of force and unequal treaties. The results were minimal and growth slow, met with strong opposition and many "missionary incidents" suited. After mid-century, however, some missionaries did change their strategy. People such as Young John Allen, James Legge, W.A.P. Martin, Timothy Richard and Leighton Stuart published the Review of the Times (Wanguo Gongbao), cultivated relationships with intellectuals, did research in the classics, translated Christian and Western literature for China and established Christian universities. Thus a coterie of Chinese intellectuals was produced for the church of China, able to dialogue with intellectuals outside the church during the May Fourth Movement (1919) and the anti-Christian movement of the 1920s. Possessing the ability of self-criticism, these intellectuals were able to bring new life to the church in China. Catholic intellectuals such as Ma Xiangbo and Wu Jingxiong also made important contributions toward the intellectualization of Christianity, but for historical reasons, Catholic and Protestant Christianity still suffer from their association with imperialism and being a "foreign" religion. They are still discriminated against, held in disdain and resisted by the vast majority of Chinese people. After the founding of new China, Christianity would have lost the space for its existence were it not for the religious policy of the people's government.

Buddhism, Islam and Christianity are imported religions, yet their past development and future prospects all differ. Various political, social and economic causes all figure in this, yet one of the most decisive factors will be the way these religions treat traditional Chinese culture and intellectuals. Christianity should summarize its historical experiences, both positive and negative, and learn from them.

## 2. Christianity and Intellectuals Since 1949

In order to remove the tarnish of "tool of Western imperialism" from its name and regain its selfhood, the church in China came under the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in the 1950s. It began to gain recognition and understanding from the people of China. After the 1960s and especially during the Cultural Revolution and attacks from ultra-leftism, Christianity and all other religions almost disappeared. Intellectuals were labeled "stinking number nine," a humiliating categorization hitherto unheard of. At that time, dialogue was out of the question. Being rejected by society, Christians and intellectuals became "partners in suffering." In the late 1970s as normality was restored from chaos and government religious policy reinstated, the churches began to grow rapidly.



But the educational level of Christians was on the whole, low. Also they were on the conservative side theologically. At the same time there arose in China a group of intellectuals who were critical of religion. Their general outlook was greatly influenced by the Marxist notion of religion as the "opiate of the people." Religion was prohibited as an area of academic research; it was only to be critiqued as a reactionary social force. Between 1979 and 1986, there was a "second opium war" in China, which involved many debates over whether or not religion and theology were topics worthy of intellectual study and research.

In recent years, more and more centers for research into religion and philosophy have been established, including those in the Chinese Academies of Social Sciences, Nanjing University, Shanghai University, Sichuan University, Fudan University, (Shanghai) and Beijing University. Intellectuals have published articles and books of research findings on religion, and have undertaken translation of writings on religion and theology, thus treating a "fever" of religious interest. There has also emerged a new group of religious scholars who are open, competent and interested in religion, although most are not religious believers themselves. They have broken out of the bondage of slavery to took learning and being dogmatically doctrinaire. They study and observe religion objectively and scientifically from the academic perspectives of sociology, psychology and history of religions. These intellectuals have published a large volume of religious books, including both translations and original work. As far as I know, more than five hundred publications have geared, the majority being studies of Christianity. Fifteen years ago, writers were critiquing Christianity as being "foreign" and an "opiate," but today such criticism is rare. Quite a few of these writers show deep understanding and sympathy with Christianity and their writing on theology is of high quality.

Publication is also going on within the church, but works comparable to those by intellectuals outside the church number less than thirty. This is a serious indictment and challenge to the church. It is also an excellent opportunity which we have never had before in the history of Christianity in China.

Looking at the church from within since restoration of the government's religious policy and the start of the liberalization process, we see that Christianity has grown more than any other religion. The number of Protestant Christians is well over ten million, more than twelve times the total before Liberation. There are more than 50,000 churches and meetings points, the majority of which are in the countryside. Many of these Christians have a low educational level and lack Christian nurture and pastoral care. False teachings and heresies easily sway them. Their religion blends easily with popular religions and their practices, creating a negative influence in society. It is precisely this kind of religion that is despised by Chinese intellectuals.

The so-called "normal" churches in large and medium-sized cities and townships (those related to the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement) have ministers and church members who have been greatly influenced by fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Their tendency is towards conservatism and narrow theological perspectives, with a strong, emphasis on "purity of faith and spirituality" (a

preoccupation with personal "spiritual" experience and "salvation" for the next life) or a utilitarian use of Christian faith to obtain blessing and to avoid calamity. They are cut off from the realities of society and they are deeply suspicious of anything that is ethical, intellectual, modern and indigenously Chinese. Many sermons have been preached from the pulpits of the churches that feed into this type of backwardness, which abhors Chinese intellectuals. Occasionally, out of curiosity, some intellectuals set foot in the church, but after a few brief encounters, they seem to be repulsed and depart. The number of intellectuals lost to the churches far exceeds the number gained. In the last dozen years, the educational level of Christians may have been slightly raised, but it is still far from the level of such intellectuals.

From the two paragraphs above, it is clear that the relationship between the church and intellectuals outside the church is a delicate one. On the one hand some intellectuals have developed an interest in Christianity. They are seekers who want to understand and they have expressed approval, but the church is retreating toward conservatism, holding on to what is outmoded and obsolete, keeping intellectuals at arm's length, or being lukewarm toward them. It is worth noting, however, that in recent years, there has appeared in Chinese society a group of "culture" Christians. Through their academic research, these culture Christians have gained an understanding and sympathy and even an emotional identity with or conversion to Christian faith. Some have even received the rite of baptism, but show little interest in the activities or organized religion of the church. They remain "floaters" among the churches, but as individual Christians who claim to be "believers," they have made contributions to Christianity through their profession of faith, intellectual research and writing. Thus they broaden Christian influence among China's intellectuals. In reality they are the bridge between Christianity and the intellectuals of society.

Knowing the intellectuals of China is an important new task for the church. We have stated previously that Buddhism, Taoism and Islam have gone through a process of mutual interpenetration with Confucianism. They were synthesized with traditional Chinese culture and have become indigenous Chinese religions. Although their experience can serve as a paradigm, the situation is different today. China today is in a stage of reform and openness and our society is undergoing dramatic and rapid changes. After the traumas of the May Fourth Movement's slogan of "down with Confucius and company" and the Cultural Revolution's "down with Lin Biao and Confucius," Confucianism has lost its position as part of the Chinese orthodoxy. The influence of traditional culture on intellectuals is on the wane; it is perhaps barely recognizable. How big a market exists among intellectuals in China for the so-called neo-Confucianism is quite debatable. In the mighty torrent of reform and openness, contemporary Chinese intellectuals have been greatly influenced by the ever-changing pluralistic academic tides, which are far greater than those of traditional thought. This can be shown by the mere fact of the content of literature and writing on Christianity in the last decade and a half.

### 3. Theological Reflection

Changing Trends in Theology. There have always been two strands in Christian

theology, one centered on salvation and the other on creation. The former frequently leads into exclusivity, while the latter is more open-ended, more easily inclusive of other progressive thinking. Chinese Christianity in the last century and more has been greatly influenced by the Western missionaries who brought it to China, placing more emphasis on human sin and fallenness. Using a substitutionary notion of atonement and redemption to explain Christ as savior and the claim that there is "no salvation outside the church," it separates believers and non-believers, the saved and the condemned, emphasizing the afterlife and eschatology while playing down this world of the here and now. Highlighting faith as primary while relegating virtue and action to secondary status, it also neglects human ethics, morality and good works. It treated Western culture as Christian gospel but excluded indigenous cultures as being man-made. All these narrowly religious tendencies have driven the Chinese Church into a type of self-imprisonment, leaving it enclosed in a very small secondary culture drifting further and further from the intellectual world.

The other strand interprets Christianity in a creation-centered manner. This is not really a departure from Scripture, creating something novel and unique, but is also based on the revelation of the Bible. In the history of theological thinking there are plenty of rich resources that we can draw upon in support of a creation-centric trend. For example, seeing love as the very nature of God who created heaven and earth and who is the lord of all things, makes creation, perseverance, salvation and sanctification a continuous and unending process. The "Cosmic Christ" participates in this whole process to manifest the love of God. All the cultures of the world have their truth, goodness and beauty-all coming from God. The Holy Spirit is the wisdom and power that connects God the Father, Christ the Son and all created entities.

Human beings are created in the image of God, having free will and the power to gain knowledge. Though different from other created entities, human beings are not perfect. They are only "half-made." Human beings are co-workers with God in the entire creation process, participating in creation while being completed themselves. They are weak and full of inadequacies; they are in sin, which works against God's will. Therefore humans need salvation and sanctification by which to gradually become new beings in Christ, in the stature of His fullness. Thus is the boundary between belief and unbelief broken and the definition of faith given new meaning. All those who follow God's will, who practice love and justice, are accepted by God. Of course this is only a rough framework, not a completely systematized scheme and has still to be perfected. Its direction, however, is an open-ended one that has room for all the progressive and positive elements of various cultures. This kind of Christianity is more likely to be acceptable to intellectuals in China.

The Dialogue Between Modernism and Pluralism. The whole of China is caught up in this dialogue with intellectuals in the forefront of the modernization process. To resist modernization would be to put a wrench into the wheels of historical progress. I have pointed out elsewhere that we are not ready, in the church in China, to speak of the contribution of Chinese Christians to modernization. We need to learn from Vatican II in its call for *aggiornamento* in adjusting to the needs of the times.

Pluralism is an undeniable fact. Christianity, Protestant and Catholic, is the largest religion in the world. But in China the number of the believers is not yet 2% of the population. How we should treat the vast majority of those who believe in other religions or in no religion is an important theological task for us. Contemporary missiology has entered into a period of "paradigm shifts," from ecclesio-centered to Christ-centered, God-centered and entering into dialogue. But most people in the church here are afraid to "dilute" or to "lose" the uniqueness of Christianity. They are threatened by dialogue and they hesitate to move in this direction. This is another important reason why the church is alienated from the intellectual world.

Contextualization of Theology and the Construction of a Chinese Theology. Contextualization of theology (through indigenous language and nurture in the soil of culture) has become a hot topic in the last two decades. More than seventy years ago, there were intellectuals in China within the church who made a significant contribution by advocating the need for indigenization. They included Xie Honglai, Wang Zhixin, Xie Fuya and T.C. Chao (Zhao Zichen). Today the times are different. How is Chinese culture defined (including folk and elite forms)? In today's social context of reform and openness we need a new understanding. This will require time for research by intellectuals within and outside the church. We should not be over-anxious, demanding instant production of a systematized Chinese theology.

Renewal and Construction of the Church. In China today, Christianity has entered a period of "post-denominationalism." Ecclesiology is a weak link in the theological chain, whether in theory or practice. No system readily at hand, whether a hierarchical system with bishops, reformed representative, or congregational, is entirely suitable. The China Christian Council is not a church according to traditional ecclesiology. It may be only a temporary measure. In order to maintain unity and solidarity, we follow the principle of mutual respect in our faith, liturgy and church polity.

As the church grows and develops, many small groups are beginning to show increasing tendencies toward fragmentation. We need to have new policies and concepts. Are we going to liberalize our thinking to move away from a Western notion of the church and ecclesiastical system, make a bold and brave reformation? In fact, each of the three types of church order mentioned above has its own biblical basis, but none fell from heaven perfected in the beginning. They have developed in history within different social systems. The church is organized by communities of Christian people and the function of the church is to maintain faith and religious life, to give stability and continuity. Ecclesiology is a later addition.

If we look at the church as the *ecclesia*, the called and chosen, it is easy to conclude that we are meant to be separated from the outside world for self-perfection. But if we see it as *koinouia*, as fellowship, as communion of the saints (*communio sanctorum*) or as the body of Christ, then the emphasis is on harmony, cooperation and complementarity with one another. The Council of Nicea pointed out four characteristics of the Church: that it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. This definition seems to be more flexible and more

open to an inclusive interpretation. When it comes to church systems, the ministry, sacraments and liturgy, the church has been even more influenced by historical and cultural factors. These tend to put a halo and sense of mystery on their organization and activities, something not easily comprehended by intellectuals. The church should break out of this ecclesiological framework, which is predominately Western and suggest a new ecclesiology that is more suitable to the situation in China. This is what the church in the West did in the 16<sup>h</sup> and 17<sup>h</sup> centuries.

Fifty years ago, it was suggested that the church be a fellowship built on love. If we use a creation-centered theology, liberalize our thinking, broaden our horizons, be concerned about society and join the people in building a new China and a new world, then we will gain greater identification with and understanding from intellectuals.

Edited translation, with Don Snow.

## **The Chinese Church in a Transitional Society - Chen Xida**

The environment. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been considerable changes in global politics, economics, culture and religion. The political hegemony of the superpowers is now past history and cooperative relations between nations have replaced political confrontation. A blending of cultures and economic cooperation are now fact. Some people predict that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, religion in the global arena "will be marked by dynamic new forms so fascinating that they will bring to an end the secularism of the new world order."

In China, Deng Xiaoping's initiatives in thought emancipation have brought about gigantic changes in society and people's understanding of politics, economics and culture. Society is now experiencing a phase of "societal transformation" (including movement in society, economics, shifts in political control, cultural development, etc.) "societal transitions, changes in family patterns, even individual transition." Moving toward the 21<sup>st</sup> century, religion in China will also face the development of "secularism" (becoming increasingly inseparable from general society) and "pluralism." This is an inevitable trend in the future of religion. In such an international and domestic atmosphere, the church in China has an opportunity to develop in ways previously unknown.

On the other hand, in the conflict between idealism and realism, tradition and modern pluralistic values, such societal changes mean people do not know which way to turn. The direction society is taking is difficult to discern, which means it is difficult for the individual to situate him/herself, so that an apparent "aimless spirituality" and an individual bent towards "marginalization" create a societal and individual loss of heart, a proliferation of short term actions, decadence and all sorts of irrational behavior. All of this seriously impedes the healthy development of the church.

Challenges. A society in transition compels the church to re-examine itself in a timely fashion and to respond promptly to the needs of people in different sectors for the gospel, making itself able to supply ultimate concerns to the faithful, "to provide ethics and models for human life," and "entering into the world to serve those in difficulties" and moreover to be able to provide "a holy guarantee for laws of value," in ways society expects, fusing these into a new type of culture. Thus, social transition requires that the church strengthen itself and respond positively to society's needs for the Gospel as well as to the calling of the Spirit.

A transitional society can function as a positive impetus for the church, at the same time as it impacts the church in many negative ways. Secularism in society influences the church's faith and standard of values: individualism is destroying the church's unity, utilitarianism is rampant in church decision making and the market economy threatens the church's very existence. In the marginalization of the individual in society, the church, too, tends towards marginalization, and a great number of unwelcome contradictions, conflicts and rottenness have appeared during the stages of initiating and building up the church.

Results of an opinion poll among a group of seminary students revealed that 53.65% believe the greatest problem facing the church today is "relationships among co-workers;" 41.46% believe the greatest problem is "quality of leadership;" emerging "organizational bureaucracy in the China Christian Council and Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement; intellectualization of theological education (removed from believers' concrete situation); that urban churches have become showplaces and rural churches are full of superstition. These phenomena of marginalization in the church seriously threaten unity in the church, affect its witness and impede its healthy development.

The church's response. According to Professor Chen Zemin, "Since the church in China today is young and conservative and has a foreign image, since it is small and backward, faced with the dangers of division, unable to be self-supporting, is poorly equipped theologically and must witness to Christ's Gospel amidst China's modernization..." it is therefore too early to speak of the church's contributions to China's modernization. However, the church must squarely face reality and build itself up in order to meet the challenges and demands of society. It can respond on a number of fronts:

In faith. To face the challenges of society, the church in China must "Let the church become the church." The church must reflect the "heavenly vision," and meet the spiritual needs of people, just as the earth is nourished and moistened by nature, enabling crops to grow. This is to say the church must have life, God's presence and action. The late Rev. Peter Tsai (Cai Wenhao) used to criticize some churches for being "more like an office of the feudal government than like the church" and some church workers for causing their churches to deteriorate. Rev. Tsai also raised the point that: "Our Three-Self and church affairs organizations should be assisting local churches to transform church buildings into churches. Three-Self and Christian Council organizations should themselves become church-like, thereby preventing any tendency towards institutionalization." This is the demand of the mass of believers. A church building which transforms into the church will certainly be able to unite many more believers on the path of loving country and loving church.

In theology. The church must strengthen theological construction. The church must give serious attention to reflection and the study of ecclesiology and to raising believers' church consciousness. Professor Chen Zemin thinks the church in China has seriously neglected ecclesiology. Before 1949 the church focused exclusively on spreading the Gospel; after Liberation Three Self was concerned simply to maintain the existence of the church, not with the union of the church itself. Following the Cultural Revolution, the Three Self Patriotic Movement and China Christian Council have become service organizations; they are not a church in theological terms. Chen hopes that "when the time is ripe (perhaps before the turn of the century), Three-Self can complete its historic mission, and the China Christian Council can become "The Protestant Church of China."

Chen believes that the church should "first of all, be *koinonia*, a kind of mutual spiritual fellowship. Secondly, the church should be *ecclesia*, an organization called out

from among the people." He further notes: "The ideal church should consider all the people of the world as brothers and sisters."

In polity. The church in China must pay close attention to Chinese social, political and cultural issues. Bishop K. H. Ting believes the ideal Chinese Church should satisfy believers and find favor among people outside the church. From his perspective, the church should give priority to ethical questions. Ting feels that "we clearly do not want antinomianism to grow within the church; we can only strive to help religion reform." This is the purpose of theological education. He says: "Raising the political awareness [of theological students] has yet to influence their religious faith; nor has it yet brought an ethical dimension to their faith, so it is not yet enough. Because in the depths of their hearts, their faith is still a matter of the contradiction between belief or unbelief .... therefore I believe that theological transformation is very important and this is what I am putting my energies into now."

In administration. The church must strengthen administration. Amid the competitive atmosphere of the market economy, greater stress must be given to this, fully utilizing limited human and material resources and steadfastly running the church well. The Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference called on the church to "seize the moment, do our work well, and speed up our efforts to run the church well." We must "resolve to put all our efforts into this, beginning with real needs and making solid progress . . ." Rev. Su Deci, while speaking about the task of building up the church, also pointed out that "the post-denominational era Christian Council is as yet only a transitional organ, the organizational and administrative functions of the church are still in a vacuum state, therefore we must 'fill' this 'vacuum' as soon as possible-this is the urgent task our church faces today."

Further points for consideration. In short, faced with the challenges of society, "The church should not simply sigh over changes," but rather affirm and proclaim even greater change: proclaim a "new heaven and a new earth" and the vision of a "New Jerusalem, the Holy City." Just as the early church kept to its "heavenly vision", not assimilating into the secular world in good times or losing hope in bad, this heavenly vision will enable the church to welcome all the challenges of society.

On the other hand, the church must squarely face the realities of today's society and communicate the church's faith, values and standards amidst the concrete realities of life today. It must realize its own potential in society by achieving wholeness and unity and by a concern for church polity, planning and program implementation.

This is also to say that the church must be concerned about people's quest for faith, ethical orientation and moral standards from a faith perspective. It must view unity and peace in society from the perspective of what benefits the whole, identify its own place on the basis of the mission of the church and be concerned about what people need for existence from the perspective of the material life. At the same time, the church must resist the influence of secularization on the church's faith and values, resist the harmful effects of individualism on the unity of the church, resist the influence of utilitarianism



on decision making in the church and resist the threat to the church's administration and existence posed by market forces.

Therefore, in order to face the challenges of society, the church in China must "see the present according to God's future." On the one hand the church must maintain its own faith and vision, secure in itself. On the other hand the church must integrate into and bond with the realities of society as it spreads the Good News of the time. The church must go up and down the "ladder to heaven" carrying God's will and blessings to the people and people's needs and praise of God to the Lord. This is the fundamental task of the church in China today.

*Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 2 (1998), p. 29.  
Translated by Ewing W. Carroll

## **Spiritual Experience and the Unity of the Church - Sun Meici**

Since the 1950s people have been looking at the question of unity within the Chinese Church and trying to achieve it. Solid progress has been made on the road toward unity with believers from various denominations towards participating in a united worship, partaking in Holy Communion together, respecting each other's understanding of faith, and in the commonality which has been achieved in matters of faith and fellowship.

Several decades have now gone by and the Chinese Church of the 90s is in a post-denominational phase. Although denominations are now a thing of the past, it is a reflection of the richness of life in Christ that the particular faith and fellowship characteristics of some denominations are again reappearing in some places, although in a spirit of mutual respect. At the same time, however, since each person's experience of God is not the same as the next person's, differences and disparities still exist. Moreover, because many believers are still very young in the faith, their knowledge of God remains at the stage of pursuing what they see as spiritual experiences. Such believers cannot fully accept all the different ways in which God reveals Himself. Instead, they form separate groups and factions within the church, thus influencing church unity.

"Unity" was Jesus' prayer to God the Father for His disciples before going to the cross (John 17: 11, 20-23). It was also His command to His disciples, and is that which every believer constantly prays for. As we look at the current situation within the Chinese Church, we ask ourselves: Where is the unity? How can we bring the Chinese Church to greater unity? These are questions that every believer needs to reflect on and explore today. For now, I will concentrate on spiritual experience and church unity.

The principles underlying these reflections include searching out our broad similarities while preserving our small differences, maintaining an attitude of mutual respect, bearing with each other in love, dealing peaceably among ourselves and living together the life of the triune God, and in this way, ultimately reaching unity. The scope of my reflection here falls essentially into two parts: 1) spiritual experience and church unity from the perspective of the early church in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost; and 2) church unity in light of the inner differences and connections experienced among the three Persons of the Trinity.

First of all, I believe, the term "spiritual experience" points to an experience wherein the whole of a person's life encounters God. This can also be expressed as a person's inner life encountering the different Persons of the God of the Trinity. This experience brings humankind the confidence of saving grace and causes the whole nature of a person's life to change, bringing that person's life into union with the life of the triune God. By extension, the experience also brings the Church as a whole, through its individual members, into unity with this God. The Church is made up of people called by God who have received God's saving grace, whose lives have been rightfully joined with the life of God, and who also gather together, worship together, and dedicate themselves

to God. All those who have encountered the triune God will come together with others in one church, and this Church is Christ's body.

Chapter 2 records that the Holy Spirit came down upon Jerusalem at Pentecost. People from many different places were gathered together there, including the disciples, who were originally from Galilee. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them power of utterance." That is to say, all the people who came from different places said they heard the disciples speaking "in their own tongues" (see Acts 2:1-11).

These people who came from different places included Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judaeans, Cappadocians, people from Pontus, Asians, Phrygians, Pamphylians, Egyptians and the areas neighboring Libya around Cyrene, also some visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs (see Acts 2:9-10). These people were truly representative of the whole Mediterranean world of the time, cutting across the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. They all had their own "native tongues," languages that were very different from one another and mutually unintelligible. However, encountering God's Spirit, a vast change occurred in their situation, with the disciples from Galilee suddenly "talking in their own tongues," telling of the great things which God had done (see Acts 2:1-11).

We can see the result of this incident: These people were originally strangers to each other, speaking different languages, cut off from each other in every way. Through the coming down of the Holy Spirit, they encountered God. Their languages were still very different (see Acts 2:8, 10 "native tongues"), but in the Holy Spirit, they were able to communicate and share the news they had received concerning the "great things that God had done." From this we can see that the Church, too, is itself a channel of the Holy Spirit through its work and fellowship.

The words of Peter, recorded in Acts chapter 2, verses 14-36, led these people to come face-to-face with the Son of God, Jesus Christ, on the cross. After this encounter with Jesus Christ they were all "deeply troubled." They felt remorse for their sins, repented and were baptized, their sins were forgiven, they entered the church and became its members (see Acts 2:37-41). From all of this we can see that, although these people came from different places and spoke different languages, they nevertheless came together before the face of one who revealed God's love to them, the crucified Son, Jesus Christ. This same effect took place in their inner lives as well.

We know from what is recorded in the Bible that for everyone - the many individuals in the Old Testament and the collective church of the New Testament as well as each member of the Church today - though their specific experiences differ, there are huge and numerous similarities in how the inner life is affected following an encounter with God.

Look at some biblical examples of those who have met God: Adam and Eve's sense of shame (they "became aware of sin," see Genesis 3:10); Moses' sense of awe and

feelings of insignificance and smallness (see Exodus 3:6,10); David's feelings of remorse over sin along with the feelings of sorrow and grief (Psalm 51); the feelings of sinfulness, weakness and powerlessness shown by Isaiah and other prophets. All these experiences were accompanied by feelings of complete trust and obedience, of being chosen and called to mission. All are of a similar nature to the feelings each and every disciple experienced in encountering the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. More importantly, a shift occurs at the center of the life of each person who has experienced an encounter with God. This shift takes the form of a move from having "self" at the center to having life in God and witnessing to God's saving grace at the center. There is also a sense of having, as one's own mission, the responsibility to praise and speak of "God's great works."

Down the ages in the church, it has been difficult to avoid differences in people's experiences of the Spirit. This is largely because different people live in different places, with different education levels and different cultural backgrounds. And people have different ways of expressing their spiritual experiences. However, after an encounter with the triune God, these feelings and realizations bear many similarities to each other. Specifically, faced with the God of the Trinity, we come to know our own sinfulness and weakness. When faced with a God who is truly without limit, we realize our own limitations and lack of ability. Yet, it is just such a sinner, such a weak person, one destined for destruction, who still receives God's saving grace and, more than that, the right to eternal life in union with God. The atonement on the cross of the Son, Jesus Christ, does not simply bring sinners who were lost to return to stand before the face of God and become a people of God's children. They receive at the same time the very mission that Jesus had, namely, to witness to God, glorify God, spread the news of God, and moreover, to dedicate their lives to this. A common form of expression of this experience is, in front of God and all His people, to admit one's own sin, accept that sin and repent of it, be baptized, and enter the church. This is the same spiritual experience for all people, even though the spiritual encounters that brought them to this point may have been very different.

This common spiritual experience allows believers in the church to affirm, with all honesty, that they all share one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God (see Eph. 4:4-6). This is precisely where the most basic foundation of church unity lies.

Many individuals in the Church have had different spiritual experiences and encounters. The Apostle Paul argues that the gifts which people receive from the Holy Spirit may be different but the spiritual experience we gain from a spiritual encounter with God is very similar in nature, and it is all experienced through one and the same Holy Spirit. Therefore, although inevitable differences will exist within the Church, it is still the Lord's body. Each believer is just like a limb in the body, although different to other limbs and with different uses, but all still "receiving sustenance from the same Holy Spirit," united into one body and all belonging to that same body (see Rom.12:4-5; 1 Cor.12:12-27). This is just as Jesus Christ said, "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn. 15:5). Within any one church congregation, individuals will have both differences and similarities. Similarly, within the Church Universal, or among churches in different areas or churches within different denominations, the members may differ but will also have

certain things in common. I believe that the internal relations in any individual church within the Church Universal are rather like the relationships between the different persons of the triune God where there is unity in diversity as well as diversity in unity, the three being united into one. For this reason, I would now like to talk about "church unity" in the context of the internal relationships within the Trinity.

The Trinitarian view of God explains and describes in a precise manner the inner unity which exists within God. The God of the Trinity is the one true God. However, each time the divine nature is made manifest in a single Person of the Trinity. This is because each Person of the Trinity does not depend on its relationship with the other two Persons for its existence as a separate Person, however it does depend on the others for its divinity. The divinity of the Son and the Son's relationship with the Father depend on the intermediary work of the Holy Spirit. As far as the Son is concerned, the Father and the one true God are one and the same. But even for the Father it is only through the Son and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, praising the Father and the Son that He finds His divinity.

Wolfhart Pannenberg has said that God's divinity is in his immanence in the phenomenological world. Not only is the divinity of the Son determined by His oneness with the Father, Father and Son are God only in union with the Spirit who makes all things new for the sake of the Kingdom. God's unity is in no sense found first in any sort of tritheism. It exists only in the shared nature of the three Persons. There are three Persons because each Person is the one God. This applies as well to the interrelatedness of the Persons. And though we are speaking of divine Persons here, the one God is also expressed in other persons. Thus, they join together in mutual praise and so God is truly without limits, that is, immanent in the world and yet transcendental.

Pannenberg thus sets out his view that the inner unity of God lies in God's inner oneness and commonality. Yet, the inner unity of the God of the Trinity is determined by God's inherent nature, namely, that He is also the Eternal Living God.

The author of I John uses the phrase "God is love" to understand the idea that "God is alive" in its expression in the death of Jesus on the cross. Rahner sees Jesus' death as an illustration of a strong and powerful selflessness in the midst of (God's) self-communication which grows ever stronger and more powerful. It is a kind of self-relatedness which is free to transcend the self, to lose and commit the self. God witnesses to Godself in the unique sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As love expressed in this way, God becomes one with the crucified Christ in the Person of the Son and further, dies and is resurrected in Christ, revealing Godself as the unity of Life and death for life. As love understood in this way, God in the Holy Spirit's grace creates faith that can be experienced by believers. Thus, God is love, not only in God's self-connectedness, but in God's relationship with human beings.

As it is described above, the Church in itself is a fellowship which possesses God's life. It exists within the love of the life of God and certainly experiences God's inherent nature-the selfless love of Christ. All who experience the immanent nature of life in encountering the triune God, must be people who have experienced the love of Christ and

who live in God's love.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down upon the church in Jerusalem and the life of the group of disciples there was renewed and changed following their encounter with God's Spirit. Here we see a model for church unity: they all persevered in respecting the apostles' teachings, maintained contact with one another, all broke bread together, all prayed together. They were in fellowship with the life of the triune God (see Acts 2:42-47).

At Pentecost, the experience of the Holy Spirit coming down upon Jerusalem is a witness to the saving grace of the triune God. We can also see that the key to church unity is this coming of God. God's coming is made possible through the unity and diversity of the inner relatedness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although individuals within the church may have their differences in the way they experience their encounter with this triune God, there should nevertheless be certain points in common if everyone is truly living together in the life of this same God. The Church collectively experiences one Holy Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God, but it is precisely the "Father of all" who is "over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6). Therefore, in order to achieve church unity, we need people who have had spiritual experiences to mutually respect each other, to be linked together and love each other. Respect helps to forge connections with each other in unity. Therefore, all those who have experienced the triune God, having thus encountered the God of Everlasting Life, should be those who, in Christ, work together in harmony to unite the church into one.

The Chinese Church is now in the "Council" stage, meaning that it is still in the process of uniting. This process requires mutual respect among believers. The fact that each individual's spiritual experience is different from the next, does not mean we can ignore the things which all our spiritual experiences share, that is, a recognition of the life of the triune God. Through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, we recognize that life in Christ is rich and that God's salvation is almighty, yet what we individuals experience of all this has its limits or, to put it another way, is but one experience. Therefore, within this revelation of the triune God, church unity requires of us as individuals to know our place and function within the Church—we are each merely one limb among many within the body. This is not to suggest that "I alone deserve respect." Unity in the Chinese Church requires all believers to mutually respect and bear with one another. It requires the seeking of broad similarities along with the preservation of small differences. It also requires us to "be humble always and gentle, and patient too, putting up with one another's failings in the Spirit of love. Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which one Spirit gives." (Eph. 4:2-3).

*Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 2 (1998), p. 51 .  
Translated by Ian Groves.

## **The Development of Rural Christianity in China and its Challenges - Ma Jianhua**

It is now nearly twenty years since the churches in China were restored in the 1980s. As we look back at the last two decades we are filled with gratitude to God. Although the Chinese Church has gone through the valley of the shadow of death, God has indeed led us to green pastures. Many who are hungry and thirsty have been filled and found rest by the still waters. The growth of the church in recent years has been phenomenal, especially in the countryside. God has added daily to the church the number of people who are saved. Christian faith has become known to and accepted by more and more people. In this paper I would like to share two points: 1) The development of Christianity in rural China and 2) the challenges faced by rural churches and their response.

### **The Development of Christianity in Rural China**

In the 1960s China went through ten years of "Cultural Revolution" which affected all sectors of Chinese society, not least religion. During this period, churches were closed or torn down, Bibles were destroyed and pastors could not preach or serve their people openly and were forced to seek other employment. In these years of darkness Christianity seemed to have vanished from Chinese soil. At that time many people, including pastors and church leaders, were pessimistic about the future of the church in China. They thought the institutional church would never reappear. No one dreamed that so many devout Christians would not give up their faith. These Christians tried every means to preserve the Bible. If they did not possess a Bible, they copied it by hand.

In recent years, I have heard many moving testimonies from Christians in the farming areas and mountainous regions who never stopped worshipping God, though they had no place to meet publicly. They would gather together in secret to read the Bible and pray. They felt deeply the need to spread the Gospel, "in season or out of season." Thus, through these people and by these means, God's word was spread. Indeed God did preserve a remnant of God's people. This is the important reason why, when the Cultural Revolution ended, the number of Christians not only did not decrease, but in fact increased. I myself have been to the ethnic minority regions of Yunnan Province to assist in training church workers in the villages. The Christians there told us that they had never stopped worshipping together during the Cultural Revolution era. Since they would go up to the mountain to meet and pray in those days, even today when they built their new church building, they built it on that very same site where God's presence was so keenly felt.

At the close of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government restored its policies and implemented reform and liberalization. The government has restored freedom of religious faith. This was indeed a historical turn for the church in China. The door of the gospel was once again opened. The hitherto occupied church buildings and property were slowly returned. Bibles and Christian literature are again being published. Seminaries are reopened or newly established. And meeting points in rural China are being set up one by

one. We can say that the church in China is in a period of "rising from the ruins." Improvement of the external environment has brought great opportunities for the church. There are vast numbers of church leaders and lay Christians, all of one heart and mind to glorify the gospel by diligently and cooperatively doing the work of the church, with little concern for personal gain or loss. Moreover, these Christians went out to seek out those former church members who had gone astray, to bring them back one by one. Whenever specific needs (such as furnishings) arise in rural churches or meeting points, Christians take the initiative to provide them, often by bringing needed items from their own homes. This loving spirit and dedication have been an inspiration to the growth of the church. However, the greatest felt need was for an adequate place to meet. Therefore in the villages there has been a "fever" to erect new church buildings. Brothers and sisters in Christ willingly contribute both their money and their labor. Many sell their pigs and grain in order to contribute towards the building of the church. This is how many country churches were built using simple, practical, rural Chinese architecture. Such construction is continuing today and will continue as an important task of the church, since the number of Christians in rural China continues to grow. Observing the care and concern that these Christians show in their church construction, people have been greatly moved by their love and commitment. Thus even in the process of erecting a church building, God's name is glorified. In some villages the Christians had no resources to raise a church building, but made use of their own houses, or built an extension onto a courtyard. We can see many meeting points today with such simple facilities, especially in areas of extreme poverty. In general, by these means rural Christians in the Chinese countryside have been able to solve the problem of finding a place to meet.

About 70% of China's total number of Christians live in rural areas, while the majority of the clergy is concentrated within the cities. This situation is likened to that of a vast number of sheep in the countryside where few shepherds are to be found. It is a very serious situation, but we thank God who provides in wondrous ways. In response, teams of church volunteers have naturally evolved and formed. These volunteers take responsibility for worship and other tasks of the church, though they themselves have not had any formal theological training. They do study the Bible hard. The farmers are sincere and down to earth and their faith is an uncomplicated one. Although many do not have high aspirations, their love for God is genuine and deep. These volunteer church workers have partially addressed the situation in which "the harvest is great but the laborers few" that exists in the rural churches of China. They serve God in the church all the while carrying on with their own tasks of farming, and their ways are pleasing to the Lord.

For historical reasons and the fact that the educational level has been low for several generations, the quality of work among rural churches has been greatly affected. The urgent task for the church is to improve the quality of rural church workers by establishing various forms of lay training programs. The church can make use of the time between harvests to provide these courses for the farmers. The duration of such courses is from one week to six months, with a whole course stretched over a three-year period. The content is primarily Bible, with practical training such as preaching. Many of the students have returned to become active workers in their own congregations. We give God glory



and praise for this wonderful growth in the rural churches.

## 2. Challenges Faced by the Rural Church and Its Response

As we look back over the last twenty years, the growth of the church has given us great encouragement. We are thankful for the continuing growth in the number of Christians. We cannot, however, be blindly optimistic and take things for granted. We should be cool-headed in analyzing the difficulties faced by the church and seek ways to solve its problems so that the building up of the church will be more suitable to God's will and more acceptable to our people.

Most of the volunteer church workers in the rural areas have very heavy responsibilities. Because of the low level of education of people in the meeting points, these congregations are quick to grab anyone with a little knowledge to preach to them, even though these would-be preachers may themselves be new Christians. This trend can be a dangerous one. Because of the lack of proper training, such preachers inadvertently lend themselves to allowing false teachings and errors to seep in, leading to divisions in the church. Therefore, raising the quality of faith and education of volunteers in the church must be one of our long-term tasks. Strengthening lay training programs to raise their standard and to be more systematic are important goals for us. Even though these workers are volunteers, their training should be well thought out with good lesson plans supplemented by good reading material suitable for this rural ministry. The quality of preaching needs to be improved. At the moment there are more and more church volunteers, but their educational backgrounds are quite uneven. We need to assist them in acquiring and improving skills in church management. These have been priorities of the Commission on Rural Ministries of the China Christian Council and much of this work is being implemented.

On the other hand we can see that in economically depressed areas people do not even have the basic necessities of life. Often church volunteers in these areas have to travel elsewhere to seek employment. An important issue, then, is how to make them more economically stable. I believe that we need to have more concrete financial measures to help solve these problems, so that these volunteers are freer to serve the church without domestic worries.

The influence of heresies and false doctrines is greater in the rural churches as compared to churches in the cities. Many people in the churches only understand the faith partially, and in their enthusiasm may perpetuate errors and misconceptions about Christianity. Some of them have even deified themselves in the name of God, for example, a group that calls itself the "enthroned ones." In reading the Bible, they substitute "the enthroned one" whenever the name of Jesus appears. In villages where church workers' leadership is weak, people are easily swayed by such false teachings. Factions form in many churches and the body of Christ is fragmented as a result. Not only is their witness a bad one, but such believers are a negative influence on society. Rural churches should therefore take every opportunity during the slack seasons to organize study programs that can inform and nurture faith. Only by so doing can they

help believers to resist the tendency towards errors and false teachings. Christians need to know how to discern what is the guidance of the Holy Spirit and what is false teaching.

Traditional Chinese culture lays great emphasis on paying respects to departed elders. In recent years, amid feudalism and superstition, the veneration of elders has come back in full force. With relative prosperity in rural China, ceremonies for making offerings to ancestors have become more and more elaborate. The church has been teaching Christians to be filial to their elders while they live, but not to over-emphasize those who have departed this world. This teaching has created a misunderstanding among some believers that to believe in Jesus is to forget or neglect one's ancestors. In some ways the question of proper homage to ancestors has been a stumbling block to evangelism. Contradictions do appear, especially during funerals. The church continues to encourage Christians to differentiate between the essence of filiality and the dross of superstitious practices in traditional culture. Respect, filiality and loving kindness should be given to elders while they are living, rather than waiting to perform these acts during funerals or after death. Christians must bear witness in their family life and live out their faith through acts of kindness and love.

Since its reopening and restoration, the church in China has been striving to be a united church. The younger generation of church workers has very little understanding of the concept of denomination. We cannot deny the fact, however, that denominations are making a comeback in China today. Sometimes this denominationalism leads to mutual attacks and passing judgment on the state of others' souls. Some Christians are confused and do not know which way they should go, or who to follow. I have heard people ask, "How many gods do you have in your church?" All this hurts the church and blasphemes the name of God. We must work hard towards reconciliation and unity in God's love, and leave behind denominational differences so that we can be of one mind and heart to witness to the gospel of the Lord.

We bear a heavy responsibility for the rural church in China and we have a long way to go. We pray that God will keep and establish the work of our hands.

Edited translation

## **A Chinese Perspective on the Ecumenical Movement - Gao Ying**

The year 1997 witnessed the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty after its seizure and retention by Britain for 155 years following its defeat of China in the Opium War. This inevitably pushes one to review the sad pages of modern Chinese history, a history whose imprint is still deeply felt by the Chinese people. The subsequent repeated military onslaughts and partition of China by Western powers and the Japanese from 1860 - 1900 and continuing through the first four decades of the 20th century with Japanese and Russo-Japanese incursions, culminated in the Japanese occupation of northeastern China from 1931 and its full-scale invasion of the whole country in 1937. These events were paralleled by internal protest movements and violent unrest: the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64), the Boxer Rebellion (1899), the overthrow of the Qing dynasty (1911) and various other political movements as well as various counter-measures aimed against them. Finally the Civil War (1945-49) ended with the defeat of the KMT by the Chinese Communist Party and the founding of the People's Republic of China. Students of history will find every page of modern Chinese history drenched with blood, tears and the untold misery of the people. It is in this soil that the Christian Church took root.

It has been most unfortunate that the history of Protestant Christian missions in China has been entangled with Western colonialism. The unequal treaties, which led to the seizure of Chinese territory and the disregard of her sovereign rights, were the same treaties which granted extra-territorial privileges to Western missionaries. From 1807 to 1950, numerous denominational mission boards in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand sent thousands of missionaries to evangelize China. In their evangelistic zeal, the early missionaries tried to set up denominational churches affiliated with their respective "mother churches" across the whole of China. Every Western Protestant denomination was busily engaged in the China mission field against the backdrop of that nation's five-thousand-year-old culture.

Christians in China have never forgotten the devotion of those missionaries who came bringing a genuine Gospel message to China. We offer thankfulness to God for them. These missionaries' lifelong labors sowed the seeds of the Christian faith among the Chinese people and many even laid down their lives in China. However, in the course of time, not only the hundreds of millions of Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist (Taoist) and Muslim Chinese found themselves bewildered by the array of denominational manifestations of Christian faith in their country. Even Chinese Christians themselves were perplexed to discover the rivalries existing among the denominational mission boards, each claiming her own denomination as the true representative of the Gospel of our one and undivided Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of this perplexity the Protestant Church in China found itself from the very beginning divided into denominational churches, which tended to be offshoots of their "mother churches" transplanted to a foreign land. They were as mutually exclusive of each other as they were of those Christians following the Roman Catholic tradition. To the average Chinese, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have been and still are considered two separate religions. Regrettably, even

the name of the Christian God was rendered differently in Chinese by early Catholic and Protestant missionaries, such that their converts could not and still cannot share the Holy Bible together.

By the end of the 19th century, following the spread of Christianity in China and in the face of political and social changes, the Protestant Church in China found itself seriously challenged in its efforts to reach the people.

Although the various mission boards gave a lot of attention to the setting up of new hospitals, schools, orphanages and so on, witnessing to the love of Christ and bringing new converts into the church, the dependence of the Chinese Church on mission boards financially and institutionally, as well as its identification with Western culture, caused it to be alienated from the people. While patriotic national movements were on the upsurge, Protestants, consciously or unconsciously, found themselves siding with Western countries and lost the sympathy of their fellow countrymen because of this. There was even a popular saying: "One more Christian means one less Chinese."

The divisiveness of Protestantism greatly weakened its witness to the people. The church found it difficult to justify the different denominational stands. Some national leaders even raised the question: "Can Christianity, which has caused and supported so many wars in Western history, which is at present minutely divided in its own household, be a factor of help to China at all in her present life and death struggle for national unity?"<sup>1</sup> Naturally, this greatly hindered the spread of the Gospel. (In 1948, that is, 140 years after the introduction of Protestant Christianity into China, the National Christian Council (NCC) reported the Protestant population in China as 700,000-less than 0.2% of the national population.<sup>2</sup> )

Under such circumstances, thinking Christians in China began to ask: Is the body of Christ divided? Denominations grew up in Europe and North America as the outcome of historical circumstances, but did they have any meaning for China? If Christians cannot love one another, how can we preach the Gospel of Love? Further, how can a divided Church be the conscience of society, fulfill her prophetic mission and serve the whole of humankind? In their search for a way out, Chinese Christians were led to return to the Bible. The prayer Jesus offered before going to the cross "That they all may be one," became an immense moving force for Chinese church leaders. They began to see that the Body of Christ is one. Denominationalism, though it has played its role in the history of the Western churches, was counter-productive for the church in China-the Chinese cultural heritage cherishes harmony and inclusiveness in human relations and the confrontational approach of Protestant denominationalism could only weaken the Chinese witness to Christ. The way forward for the Chinese Church seemed to lie rather in establishing an indigenous, unified church freed from denominationalism.<sup>3</sup> Thus, towards the end of the 19th century, a movement for an indigenous, united Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> Faith and Order, "Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927," in *77w Necessity of Unity* ed., H.N. Bate (London, 1927), p. 497.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.499.

Church emerged.

Many Western missionaries were equally as enthusiastic about this movement as their Chinese colleagues were. The Chinese experience of Christian unity caught the attention of the mission boards of the West. At the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, Dr. Cheng Jingyi, who later became Chair of the National Council of Churches in China, called on the mission boards of the West to support the Unity Movement in Chinese churches. In his seven-minute speech he said:

"Since the Chinese Christians have enjoyed the sweetness of such a unity, they long for more, and look forward for yet greater things. They are watching with keen eyes and listening with ears for what this conference will show to them concerning this all-important question. I am sure they will not be disappointed ... Speaking plainly, we hope to see, in the future, a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions. This may seem somewhat peculiar to some of you, but, friends, do not forget to view us from our standpoint, and if you fail to do that, the Chinese will remain always a mysterious people to you!"<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the untiring efforts of the Chinese church leaders and their supporters in the mission boards, the First National Chinese Christian Conference was convened in Shanghai in 1922 with "Tile United Church" as its theme. It was attended by participants of the mainline denominations with equal numbers of Chinese and Western representation. That Conference issued a message to the Christian churches, which took an unequivocal stand against denominational divisiveness in the Chinese Church. It stated:

"We Chinese Christians who represent the various leading denominations express our regret that we are divided by the denominationalism which comes from the West. We are not unaware of the diverse gifts received through the denominations that have been used by God for the enrichment of the Church. Yet, we recognize fully that denominationalism is based upon differences the historical significance of which, however real and vital to the missionaries from the West, are not shared by us Chinese. Therefore, denominationalism, instead of being a source of inspiration, has been and is a source of confusion, bewilderment, and inefficiency ... we firmly believe that it is only the united Church that can save China, for our task is great and enough strength can only be obtained through solid unity. Therefore, in the name of the Lord ... we appeal to all those who love the same Lord to follow His command and be united into one Church ... and in calling upon missionaries and representatives of the Church in the West, through self-sacrificial devotion to our Lord, to remove all the obstacles in order that Christ's prayer for the unity may be fulfilled in China."<sup>5</sup>

The movement for an indigenized Chinese Church b or its first fruit in the first quarter of the 20th century. The Chun Hua Sheng Kung Hui (Anglican Communion)

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<sup>4</sup> Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), p. 216.

<sup>5</sup> Faith and Order, "Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927" *The Necessity of Unity* ed. H.N. Bate (London, 1927), p.495-96.

came into being in 1912. The Church of Christ in China, embracing Presbyterian and Congregationalists, was formed in the 1920s, as was the National Christian Council of China. At the Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order in 1927, Dr. Tingfang Lew of the Yenching School of Religion was invited to address the plenary session. He took "The Necessity of Unity" as his theme and shared with the conference the witness of Christian unity in the Chinese Church. His speech was challenging and thought provoking; with a vision of an indigenous Chinese Church making a contribution to the World Church. He said:

The people in the Far East have their own spiritual and religious inheritance, which is in some aspects different from that of the Western nations. Their inheritance helps them to understand the purpose of God in Jesus Christ in their own way. It may give them a certain insight and understanding which the West has not yet seen. There is among the Chinese Christians now a felt command of God to interpret Christianity in terms of the spiritual inheritance of the Chinese race. They believe that such interpretation, when made together with their own spiritual experience, should become the possession of the whole Church Universal. The movement for an indigenous church is growing more audible and more persistent in China. It is the hope of the Chinese Christians that the united Church will be enriched by the contribution of the indigenous churches not only of China but also of Japan, India and of other lands.<sup>6</sup>

The ambiguity of the modern missionary movement in China was demonstrated in that while it brought the Christian Gospel to China, it also served as an arm of Western expansionism in China. While the Western powers carved out their respective spheres of influence in China, so did the Christian mission boards from those countries. This led to two distinct features of the Protestant churches in China, namely, their unusual divisiveness and their total dependency on the mission boards. However, precisely because of that, the churches in China seemed led to go through the experience described by Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr's theme at the first WCC Assembly of 1948, "Man's Disorder, God's Design." By God's grace, the very predicament of the Chinese churches drove them zealously to struggle for indigenization and Christian unity. The Protestant churches in China were among the few so-called younger churches active in the ecumenical movement in its formative years. When the World Council held that first Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, six Chinese church representatives were present and Dr. T.C. Chao, then dean of the Yenching School of Religion, Beijing, was elected as one of the six presidents of the WCC, and the only one from non Euro-American churches.

Was it an irony of history that Chinese participation in the newborn WCC encountered a major twist? As the Cold War took shape in the post-WWII years and war broke out on the Korean peninsula in 1950, the World Council, for the first, but fortunately only time in her history, took sides in the military confrontation of the two Cold War camps and supported the US-led "New International Order."<sup>7</sup> This not only led to the resignation of T.C. Chao as president, but also to a forty-year estrangement

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 499.

<sup>7</sup> Marlin van Elederen, *Introducing; the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC publication), p. 25.

between the churches of China and the World Council. It was only after the end of the Cold War, during the Seventh Assembly, 1991 in Canberra, that the China Christian Council resumed membership of the Chinese Church in the World Council.

The forty years from the early fifties to the early 1990s held for Chinese churches an ordeal by fire and also rejuvenation in the loving grace of God. What marked the church's countenance as she emerged from the trial by fire? Externally, the church in China lives in a society governed by an openly atheist political party. Internally, after severing ties with the Western mission boards, the Chinese churches began experimenting with forms of united worship and later with a post-denominational model of church polity. These forty years probably make the experience of the Chinese Church unique within the ecumenical movement. Chinese Protestants are grateful for the warmth and understanding of the ecumenical family. At the same time, this distinct experience inevitably brings with it some sobering loneliness when we compare notes with sister churches. To cite one instance, while sitting in the Faith and Order Commission meetings devoted to the discussion of Christian unity, a participant from China cannot help the feeling that some from the European churches sometimes tend to assume that the Holy Spirit is a monopoly of Western-apostolic churches and thus any church experience beyond the Western one must be doubtful and put to serious question.

The pain of separation between the Christian Church of China and the ecumenical family was, I believe, felt equally in the Chinese churches and the world churches. When we in China thought of our Lord's prayer "That all may be one," we could not help asking ourselves "Where are we now in God's sight?" We are grateful that God, in God's good time, brought the Chinese Church and the world churches together again in the ecumenical family. This led to a revived zeal in the Chinese Church to learn about the World Council anew, forty years after its founding. On the part of the World Council, a China Ecumenical Formation Program was set up and the China Christian Council (CCC) was invited to appoint a representative working in this program. This has contributed greatly to the understanding and the solidarity between the CCC and the WCC, which will bear its fruit, I believe, in the years to come.

I am grateful to have been assigned as the first CCC representative to the WCC after forty years' estrangement. Soon after my arrival, a colleague in the administrative staff told me that many years ago when she began working with a leader of the WCC, she had so often heard the name of K.H. Ting. Now, after forty years, how exciting it was to see someone coming directly from China to work in the World Council. This led me to probe into the meaning of continuity and discontinuity in church relations in the ecumenical movement vis-a-vis world history. Standing on the threshold of a new century, Christians in China are deeply aware of being a part of the Church Universal. The growth of the Chinese Church cannot be isolated from the growth of the world churches, and the World Council is helping us in furthering our ties with churches in other parts of the world.

In the blink of an eye, my one-year assignment has come to its end. During the last year, I have been privileged to have been invited to various international meetings and seminars, including the trip to Rome with the Bossey students. I had opportunities to visit

different Units and Desks, learning and experiencing the WCC's work. What have I learned in the course of the year? The answer to this question involves a heart-searching process which I have only just begun and which will probably continue for some time after my return to China. Let me discuss below a few of the points which come to mind.

The warmth of a genuine ecumenical fellowship. Coming from the more or less homogeneous society and cultural heritage of China, one is struck by the different ethnic identities, cultural heritages, varieties of language, denominational lines, different skin colors, etc. represented in the World Council. In Geneva, with so many UN agencies and other world political and economic bodies, this is nothing out of the ordinary. What makes the World Council unique is the warmth of fellowship. Since I was with the Asia Desk and have had more opportunities for getting to know the staff in Unit IV, I can say I feel quite fond of my friends in Unit IV for their ecumenical commitment and the social services they provide to the needy through their daily work. Their humaneness touches me deeply. From my pastoral experience I believe that loving care for others is the one essential quality in ecumenical relationships. I am especially grateful to all my friends on the Asia Desk who have shown their love and care for me and have helped me greatly in many ways. I trust that this spirit will be carried on after the restructuring of the WCC. We love one another, not because we are the same, but because we, as Christians from all parts of the world, agree to differ and resolve to love. I believe this is the biggest asset and strength of the World Council.

As one who comes from a non-Christian family background, who has been baptized into the post-denominational Chinese Church, I have little knowledge of the historical denominational traditions of Christianity other than what I learned in my Seminary years. I have been glad to make up my lack of knowledge in this respect during this year. My exposure to the different emphases of the various denominations in doctrine, theology, liturgy and church polity helps me to respect differences. Last May I was invited as a guest of the WCC Women's Desk to participate in the European Orthodox Women's Seminar. This was my first experience in the life of the Orthodox Churches and it gave me a first-hand opportunity to get acquainted with the liturgy and theology of the Orthodox Church. We worship the same almighty God. All the differences in our religious experience serve only to enrich our lives in God. For this reason, I would wish to have further opportunities to learn more about Eastern Orthodoxy. During my stay in Geneva, I have been going to the Sunday services of different denominational churches, especially those that we do not have in China, such as the Eastern churches, and I have gone to the Jewish synagogue. All these experiences have helped to enhance my vision of the Church Universal and the meaning of the ecumenical movement.

At the invitation of the WCC Secretariat for Ecumenical Relationships, I attended the International Seminar of the WCC and Pentecostalism. This was my first experience of meeting with Pentecostals and getting to know Pentecostalism at first hand. Although there is no Pentecostal Church in China today, many Christians in rural meeting points choose to express their faith through the practice of faith healing and the search for miracles. They pretty much resemble Pentecostals. Through my better understanding of Pentecostalism, I now understand our own congregations in the countryside better also.



As the history of the Christian Church reveals to us, whenever the church becomes over-institutionalized and loses her early vigor, there will always be new forms of the expression of faith among the ranks of Christians. In fact, they supplement the institutional church.

In 1998 the World Council will celebrate its 50th anniversary. During the Council's existence in this second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world has undergone tremendous changes, which have in turn brought changes to the World Council itself. The present number of WCC member churches has almost doubled from its founding years and the merger of other ecumenical bodies into the World Council has served to enrich its mission and representation. On the other hand, these changes have also brought new difficulties with them. For instance, how can a balance be kept among programs in Faith and Order, Church and Society and World Mission? In our pursuit of Christian unity, how shall we consider the small minority denominations? While acknowledging the Western cultural heritage which is nurtured by Christian faith and gives the church her cultural countenance, today when two-thirds of its member churches come from the developing world, how can the WCC make further efforts at de-Westernization, thus creating new opportunities for wider participation by the Third World churches (including expansion of the official languages of the Council).

With the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the World Council has faced new challenges and is currently making adjustments. The "Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC" involves not only program but also the institutional setup. My year in the WCC coincided with this adjustment process and this has enabled me to learn about the new institutional models, which may be adopted by the WCC in years to come. I trust that following the series of adjustments being introduced, the WCC will have better coordination among her various clusters to avoid overlap and duplication; that it will also have more vigor and cohesiveness to steer the ecumenical ship forward. On the other hand, even when these adjustments have been made, the WCC will still be confronted with many serious challenges. For instance, while a reduction in staff is almost inevitable, how can the balance of women and regional representatives be maintained? How can the WCC staff be rejuvenated? How can the World Council ensure for itself a committed staff while preventing the drain of personnel from national churches?

Another new post-Cold War challenge for the Council is the possible tendency for denominational as well as regional growth. For instance, in Eastern Europe, there is no longer the same need for the Council as there was in the Cold War years. How will it be possible for the Council to build up stable relationships of mutual trust between itself and member churches? In this regard, I appreciate very much the efforts of our present General Secretary Dr. Konrad Raiser, who made up his mind at the beginning of his term to visit as many member churches as possible. He may well turn out to be the General Secretary who has visited the largest number of member churches. From my experience of WCC activities during the past year, I realize that the unique strength of the World Council lies in its broad representation of different churches and regions. The World Council can contribute more to the member churches and simultaneously consolidate its

own position by playing a bigger role as a clearinghouse encouraging mutual sharing of the ecumenical experience of the regional churches. (One example in this realm was the Faith and Order Commission's invitation for the CCC to share the experiences of the post-denominational church in China at its sessions.)

For historical reasons, Protestants and Catholics in China treat each other like adherents of two different religions. We do not worship together, or exchange pulpits, nor do we discuss issues of common interest in our church lives. There is very little communication among members of the two branches of Christianity. Here in the World Council, the joint worship every Monday morning demonstrates the "visible unity" cherished in the ecumenical movement. Likewise, the numerous projects jointly implemented by different denominations are very encouraging and challenging to us in China.

On the other hand I must confess that coming from a post-denominational Chinese Church one cannot help noticing nevertheless the sectarian and denominational lines of demarcation in the ecumenical family. These are perplexing and difficult to identify with. Also, I am afraid that any church person from the Third World who lacked proficiency in the official languages of the World Council and was not sufficiently acculturated to the Western lifestyle would find it difficult to be "at home" in the ecumenical family in Geneva. Consequently, the effective interflow of ideas and spiritual and ecclesiastic experience would be made very difficult.

On the whole, throughout the year's experience, my perception of the WCC has been enhanced, my commitment to the ecumenical movement has been deepened, and my experience of the diversity of denominational traditions has been enriched. This is a year so different from any other year in my life.

The Christian Unity Movement, which emerged in China at the turn of this century, has always been marked by its contextuality. It was the response of the Chinese Church to the dual challenges of perplexing Western denominationalism and the growing self-awareness of the Chinese Church in search of her own identity. The pioneers of the early Christian Unity Movement were themselves trained in denominational backgrounds and closely associated with the mission boards. Nevertheless, in spite of this, they stood fervently for indigenization and Christian unity in China, knowing that this was the only way to identify with our own people and lead them into the Christian Church. For Chinese Christian leaders, unity and indigenization were intertwined. Today, at the end of the 20th century, the Chinese Church is totally independent and has no institutional affiliation whatsoever with any Western mission boards. Likewise, we see the World Council as World Council of Churches, not as a continuation of the International Mission Council. This is the ground of the China Christian Council's membership in the World Council and we in China believe this is our support and contribution to the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches.

While offering our gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ for being permitted to enter into the "That they all may be one" of His grace, the church in China is fully aware of our

own shortcomings. We know that there is still a long way ahead of us before we can live up to the Church as Christ promised us to be. In our pilgrimage towards Oneness in Christ, we pray that we would be able to witness more fully to God's love with our sister churches in other parts of the world and learn humbly from their experience at the same time. We in China would like to see the continuation of the China Ecumenical Formation Program and will give it our support whenever possible. So far as I myself am concerned, after returning to China I shall be teaching "Ecumenism" at the Nanjing Theological Seminary. This course will be the first ever of its kind in the curriculum of theological seminaries in China. Through my teaching process I may be able to continue to learn further about ecumenism and meanwhile, transmit whatever I learned in the World Council to the younger generation of Christian ministry in China, hoping that the ecumenical consciousness of the Protestant Church in China will gradually be enhanced as time goes on. It is my hope that through the process of the Ecumenical Formation Program in China, more exchange programs can be provided, especially among the young people who are the future of the church in China.

Fifty years ago, in his address to the First Conference on Faith and Order, Dr. Tingfang Lew not only expressed the cry of the Chinese churches for unity, but also expressed their hopes for the Church Universal: "Finally, the united church should be the church not just for one section of the world, but for the entire world." Now, after half a century, his words are still echoed in the prayerful hearts of Chinese Christians today.

Rev. Gao presented this working report to the WCC/Asia Desk on the completion of her year in Geneva.

English original.

Chinese translation in the *Nanjing Theological Review*, No. 2 (1998), p. 19.

**FROM THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF BISHOP K.H. TING**

**Interpreting Religion and Religious Freedom Under Socialism**

## Reading Document 19

"The Basic Standpoint and Policy on Religious Questions in China's Socialist Period," Document 19, adopted by the Party Central Committee in 1982, is an important document. To see why, compare it to documents and essays on religion from the Soviet Union, or with those China has produced in the past. Comparisons such as these show that this document is in a different vein, and its views are fresh and incisive. A very special characteristic of this document is that it does not proceed from concepts and definitions, but from the reality of China, from the present situation of society and religion in China. In its approach, it adopts the invaluable style of seeking truth from facts.

The most evident expression of this approach of beginning with present reality lies in its title: "The Basic Standpoint and Policy on Religious Questions in China's Socialist Period." This tells us that the document is not dealing with religious questions in the abstract, but with religious questions in China, and not with religious questions in China in general terms, but religious questions in China during the socialist period. Religious questions in China is specific; religious questions in China during the socialist period even more so. Chairman Mao promoted the method of paying attention to specifics in doing research, rather than being content with generalities. With regard to the study of war, Chairman Mao believed that while the general laws of war should certainly be studied, it was even more necessary to study the laws of revolutionary wars, and that it was absolutely vital to study the laws of the Chinese people's revolution.

Marx and Engels studied religion in general but primarily understood religion in Western Europe. Lenin was most familiar with religion in Russia. They had little understanding of religion in China, which has its own special characteristics. For example, the role of religion in China has always been much smaller than its role in Europe. In Chinese history, divine right has never overridden the rights of rulers as it did in Europe. There was an emperor in Europe who, because he offended the Pope, had to walk a long distance barefoot and at night, to beg the Pope's forgiveness. We cannot imagine anything like this in Chinese history. Among Han Chinese, religion has always been subordinate to politics. In Europe, church creed has also been political precept, and the study of law was long under the dominion of theology. This prompted Marx to say, "the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism." But in China, religion has never occupied such a commanding position. In China, the feudal code of ethics and the patriarchal clan system have held the place taken by religion in Europe. The slogans of the May Fourth Movement were "Down with the feudal system" and "Down with Confucius." Criticism of feudalism or the patriarchal clan system was "the premise of all criticism" in China. It would be inappropriate to copy Europe in China.

Marx and Engels did not speak of the historical stages of socialism, nor did Lenin have time to study religious questions in the socialist period. What changes took place in the status and function of religion after the people took political power? How should religious questions be dealt with in the socialist period? These were extremely novel

subjects. To copy from Europe, from the old ways, or from the period of reactionary rule, would not do. As Lenin said, for example, "The present source of religion is the dread of the unchecked forces of capitalism. These forces truly are unchecked, because the masses cannot foresee them, and because the proletariat and small landholders might meet them anytime, anywhere in the course of their lives. This is what happens when they meet 'sudden,' 'unexpected,' 'happenstance,' bankruptcy and destruction, that turns them into beggars, paupers and prostitutes, even forcing them to starvation."

These words are very much in line with the situation in Russia at the time, and are quite appropriate to capitalist countries and Third World countries where the people have not yet become their own masters, but they are not appropriate for socialist new China. If we simply go by the book, how will we be able to explain present religious questions in China? Can the continued presence of religious believers be attributed to blind bourgeois forces that will suddenly turn people into beggars and prostitutes? Lenin said: "All the oppressor classes must play two social roles in order to maintain control; one is executioner and the other is priest. The executioner suppresses the protests and uprisings of the oppressed. The priest comforts the oppressed, painting for them a far-off vista of reduced suffering and sacrifice if they maintain the conditions of class rule ... and this weakens their revolutionary resolve."

If we were to quote this with reference to present-day China, we would be defeating our own purpose. Can the machinery of a country with the people in charge function to chop off the people's hands? Would our country really want to use religion as a "tool of the spirit" to break the people's revolutionary resolve? And as the young Marx said: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people." To apply this quotation mechanically to socialist China will cause problems. Are the Chinese people still "oppressed creatures?" The first paragraph of Document 19 says: "The exploiting classes needed to use religion as their primary spiritual means to anesthetize and control the masses." But China today is not under the rule of the exploiting classes, and the Communist Party and the people's government certainly do not want to anesthetize the people. If we still emphasize that religion is an opiate, then we must come out and say it-which class is it today that wants to use religion to anesthetize the people?

Since the reactionary ruling class that used religion to numb the people and the conditions which made people accept exploitation and oppression no longer exist, then if religion functions as an opiate, it is only in the sense that wine may be used to banish melancholy. Not its best use perhaps, but entirely permissible. If no distinction is made between the present and the past when we speak of the ruling classes' manipulation of religion to anesthetize the people, then our attempts are, at the very least, theoretically sloppy. In politics, we will be bound to continue "taking class struggle as the key link" in dealing with religion and it will be difficult to keep from flailing into all kinds of "leftist" methods in our work.

We have new Christians now, among whom many turned to Christianity, in their

own words, "because religion makes us do good."

Christianity speaks of love, industriousness, sincerity, reconciliation, endurance, self-denial and doing good to others. In the old society these might have been susceptible to manipulation by the reactionary ruling classes, so those classes welcomed their propagation by religion, the better to use them to drug the people. Today, however, there has been a fundamental change in the situation-political power is firmly in the hands of the people. The political and social function of these Christian persuasions is no longer the same. They can be aids rather than obstacles to strengthening stability and unity and to increasing production. People who wanted to practice these Christian virtues were never very willing to participate in "rebel" groups during the Cultural Revolution.

There is a passage in the Bible to the effect that authority is instituted by God, and people should submit to it. The KMT used this to tranquilize the people, to make them docile and obedient. But when Christians say this today under the political authority of the people, they cannot be judged reactionary. For some Christians, this idea strengthens the relationship between believers and the government. This Christian code of conduct is good for social stability and is conducive to people living and working in peace and contentment. Such Christians are more in harmony with socialism, and they are much better than people who smash and grab or pursue selfish interests. Many Christians in the countryside want nothing more than to be able to gather together once a week. They participate actively in production and their record in meeting their quota of grain for the state is very good. Pastors encourage this. Furthermore, the believers are very obedient and local cadres are well disposed toward them. Plainly, religion does not simply play the role of opiate. It may have many roles, depending on the time and conditions; it is not necessarily antagonistic to socialism.

In sum, religious questions during China's socialist period are special. What was done in foreign countries and class societies cannot simply be copied. What is special about this document is first and foremost that it does not simply go by the book, but proceeds from reality. Today the Chinese people have entered a historical period where class struggle is no longer the key link. We should have a knowledge of religious questions appropriate to this period.

We note that the word "opium" does not appear in Document 19, not even once. Only when the rule of the exploiting class in former days is mentioned is the word "tranquilize" used: "The exploiting classes needed to use religion as their main spiritual means to tranquilize and control the masses." In this the Document is very different from many documents dealing with religious questions found in the Soviet Union and in China in the past. In the past some people thought that it was unmarxist to speak of religion without calling it an opiate. I do not think it is entirely by chance that this document does not mention the word. It has thrown off dogmatism and bookishness, and does not begin with concepts and definitions. It is an expression of the fine Party tradition of beginning with reality. Explaining all religious questions by the opiate theory has always been inadequate; it is even less viable as an explanation of religion during the socialist period. Why insist on it then? There is a reluctance among some people to go and study actual

conditions; they would rather latch on to one or two well-known phrases in dealing with things. They think "opiate" is part of the nature of religion and that the theory of religion as opiate is a universal or eternal truth. They go so far as to say that it is original to Marx.

Actually, some decades prior to Marx, the phrase was already on the lips of enlightened bourgeois scholars in Germany, including those in religious circles. To claim it as an idea originating with Marx, is degrading, not exalting, to Marx. Actually, the writings and teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Chairman Mao on religion are extremely rich, comprehensive and profound. But "religion is opium," is the only phrase that comes to some people's minds and they rely on it in all questions touching on religion. The result is that they can hardly avoid being simplistic. It was Zhou Enlai who took exception to continuing to trumpet the opium theory when we were already in the socialist period. In 1950, during the CPPCC, Premier Zhou told the people: "Do not think that the slogans used during the revolution should be used even more fervidly after victory. Quite the opposite. During the revolutionary period it is necessary to make the principles clear. Now that we have political power, there are times when it is not necessary to emphasize that 'religion is an opiate.' The issue is that we must be good at isolating the minority of stubborn reactionaries." These words deserve our attention. The first special characteristic of Document 19 is its elimination of outmoded language; it begins its study of religious issues from the present reality of China and puts forward a brand-new viewpoint.

Secondly, it makes an appropriate assessment of religion and religious circles in China's socialist period.

In the debate over guiding thought for religious work, the dispute between the five natures and the two natures continues. The five natures are (1) the rootedness of religion in the masses of the people, (2) its affinity to ethnic minority peoples, (3) its international connections, (4) its continued existence over the long-term, and (5) its complexity. This theory of the five natures is an important development and a great contribution to Marxism by the Chinese revolutionary movement. The Document does not use the term "five natures," but the spirit of the whole undeniably affirms it. In the latter half of the second paragraph, the five natures are mentioned one by one in detail.

The so-called "two natures" of religion assert its reactionary nature and its deceptive nature. This document in no way advocates or plays up religion in China's socialist period as reactionary or deceptive.

Reaction is a political concept. The most that could be said of religion would be that it is mistaken or erroneous knowledge. And there are a great many people with this or that kind of error in knowledge. The idealism of subjectivism is even more prevalent. People with errors in understanding may be politically reactionary, but they may also be revolutionary, progressive and patriotic. The equation of religious faith with political reaction is a method used during the Cultural Revolution.

The Document makes the following assessment of religion and religious circles in



China today: "After Liberation there was a thorough transformation of the socio-economic system and a major reform of the religious system, and so the status of religion in China has already undergone a fundamental change. The contradictions of the religious question now belong primarily to the category of internal contradictions among the people." "We did away with imperialist forces within the churches and promoted the correct policy of independent, self-governed and autonomous churches, as well as the "Three-Self Movement"(self-propagation, self-administration and self-support). The Catholic and Protestant Churches ceased to be tools of the imperialist aggressors and became independent and autonomous religious enterprises of Chinese believers. We abolished the special privileges and oppressive exploitative system of feudal religion, attacked and exposed those reactionaries and bad elements who hid behind the cloak of religion." "By far the majority of [religious professionals] are patriotic, law-abiding and support the socialist system. Only a very small minority oppose the Constitution and socialism to the extent of colluding with foreign anti-revolutionaries and other bad elements." We note that the Document's approach toward religion is scientific, cool-headed and seeking truth from facts; it does not shy away from its subject. It has a very high assessment of religious circles thirty years after Liberation. This is in line with Comrade Deng Xiaoping's statement a few years ago that "Religious circles have made great progress."

As for having a deceptive nature, Engels and Lenin both pointed out that to see religion as the product of a meeting between a fool and a trickster is a bourgeois view. This is not to say that nothing deceptive ever happens in religion, but that the sources of religion are much more profound. It is a great over-simplification to say that religion is no more than a trick and would not exist if not for tricksters.

One-sided emphasis on the reactionary and deceptive natures of religion will inevitably lead to a struggle with religion, to a line in work that attempts to destroy religious faith. We have suffered enough distress from such a line.

Thirdly, the Document makes very clear why the Party is involved in work in the area of religion and what kind of work it should do, what the fundamental starting point and aim is, what the basic task is and is not.

There is a hypothesis which says that since Marxism is atheist then the intent and goal of the Party's work in religion must be, by whatever means, to place all sorts of obstacles in the way of religious belief, to make non-believers of believers, to employ all sorts of methods in the struggle with religion in order to limit and reduce it. This is the line that reached its full expression during the Cultural Revolution period.

The Document deals with extreme clarity with the true intentions of the Party toward religion. "The basic starting point and firm foundation for our handling of the religious question and for the implementation of our policy and freedom of religious belief lies in our desire to unite the mass of believers and non-believers and enable them to center all their will and strength on the common goal of building a modernized, powerful socialist state." The basic task of the Party and government in religious work is

"to firmly implement and carry out its policy of freedom of religious belief; to consolidate and expand the patriotic and political alliance in each ethnic religious group; to strengthen education in patriotism and socialism among them, and to bring into play positive elements among them in order to build a modern and powerful socialist state and complete the great task of unifying the country; and to oppose hegemonism and strive together to protect and preserve world peace." It is worth noting that in speaking of the starting point, foundation and basic task of the Party's religious work, the Document says nothing of reducing the number of religious believers, struggling against religion, limiting or destroying religion.

But there are those who pass over this aspect of the document without really seeing it and persist in thinking that religious freedom is just a phrase and the true intent of the Party remains to do away with religion by all possible means. In this case, dealing brutally with religious questions among the people, creating tension between the Party and the masses are all feasible. To justify themselves, they exaggerate the few instances of chaotic and abnormal phenomena in religious matters as if they were emblematic of the whole situation. This differs greatly from the assessment of the situation given in the Document.

As for the "unchecked flood" of religion, we shouldn't exaggerate this. It is certainly not a result of the implementation of the religious policy; rather it can often be attributed to failure to implement religious policy and other policies. Some people are frightened out of their wits at tales of a "religious flood" and become ambivalent about implementing the religious policy, shouting about "religion being out of control," "propagating atheism," and so on. This gives the green light to creating confusion at the grassroots and suppressing the people. This is just asking for trouble. Religious fanaticism cannot be maintained for long. What should be done is to allow the policy to be carried out. The masses will turn to the Party and bad elements (if there are any) will be exposed, isolated and dealt with.

Talk of a "religious flood" is an indiscriminating assault on religion, an all-out attack. Such a characterization makes no distinctions, does not allow for differentiation in the treatment of things and does nothing to enlarge unity. It leads easily to enlarging the scope of attack. Two years ago in one locale in Hubei province, there was an increase in the number of Christians and the sweeping statement was made that this was a "religious flood." But investigation promptly showed that there were at least two sets of circumstances that had to be distinguished: (1) one person had been pushing faith healing and exorcism, claiming the end of the world was near, in order to cheat people of money. (2) Two miners had got up a group of Christians outside the churches, but they were against healing and exorcism and refused to accept gifts, they taught that people had to achieve the "three satisfies"-satisfy the Party, satisfy God and satisfy others. This latter example was not unpatriotic, represented a fairly good type of religion and should not have been lumped together with the first example, as if both were part of the "flood." China makes distinctions in treatment even among imperialist countries. How much more then should it do so among religious believers.

Among believers we find that the large part of religious activities are normal ones. Beyond this, the Document mentions three other things, which it does not include among normal religious activities. "The resolute protection of all normal religious activities suggests, at the same time, a determined crackdown on all criminal and anti-revolutionary activities which hide behind the facade of religion, which includes all superstitious practices which fall outside the scope of religion and are injurious to the national welfare as well as to the life and property of the people." These are two "resolves."

The Document does not hold that religion will exist permanently. However, it is not going to disappear during our present stage, and even less can the cadres of our religious affairs departments be expected to take responsibility to struggle with religion in order to achieve its destruction. For cadres of religious affairs departments to desire to both unite the masses of religious believers and abolish their religious faith would be an irreconcilable contradiction. They could not, in this case, do their work well. The Party Central has responded to this in Document 19: "We must further understand that at the present historical stage the difference that exists between the mass of believers and non-believers in matters of ideology and belief relatively secondary." Belief and non-belief are not described a contradiction, but as a difference, and a minor difference that. I should think this statement would serve to sober up those distracted by the opiate theory, who promote the reactionary and deceptive nature of religion and those bent on sweeping away attacking and limiting religion.

The task of the religious affairs departments is to implement policy and unite believers. They are not charged with opposing religion, propagating atheism to believers or making non-believers of believers. For this point to be made clear and communicated publicly to those related to religion will be very good for the correction of "leftism." For many years, too much was heard of "the reactionary nature of religion," "struggling against religion," "hurrying the demise of religion," "establishing no-religion areas," and "talk about religious freedom is just for the benefit of foreigners." Unless we clearly negate all this now, it will be difficult to rectify "leftism" and difficult to change the image of government religious affairs departments among the believing masses as anti-religion departments, difficult to dispel the misgivings of the believing masses, difficult to establish true friendship with the believing masses, difficult to unite them.

I believe the central spirit of Document 19 lies in showing exactly what the intentions and desires of the Party are in its religious work.

Fourthly, the Document asks for improvement in the relationship between the government and religion in some areas. The country is presently engaged in putting into practice separation of state and commerce. Turning to religion, the failure to separate religion and state is quite serious in some areas. The problem is that it is in no way conducive to mobilizing the patriotic strength of religious circles as a bridge between Party and masses. And so it is not conducive to uniting the broad mass of religious believers around the Party.

There are three passages in the Document which emphasize that cadres should stress

the role of patriotic religious bodies at all levels. If the cadres are good at leading, if they avoid taking over and allow the religious bodies their role and power, then they can be in close contact with the believing masses.

"The basic task of these patriotic religious organizations is to assist the Party and the government to implement the policy of freedom of religious belief, to help the broad mass of religious believers and persons in religious circles to continually raise their patriotic and socialist consciousness, to represent the lawful rights and interest of religious circles, to organize normal religious activities and to manage religious affairs well."

"We must strengthen the government organs responsible for religious affairs, to enable all cadres who give themselves to this particular work to study the Marxist theory of religion in a systematic way, to thoroughly understand the Party's fundamental viewpoint and policy on the religious question, to maintain close relationships with the mass of religious believers, and to consult on equal terms with persons in religious circles in order to cooperate and work together."

"All patriotic religious organizations should follow the Party's and government's leadership. Party and government cadres in turn should become adept in supporting and helping religious organizations to solve their own problems. They should not monopolize or do things these organizations should do themselves. Only in this way can we fully develop the positive characteristics of these organizations and allow them to play their proper role and enable them, within constitutional and lawful limits, to voluntarily perform useful work. Thus they can truly become religious groups with a positive influence, and can act as bridges for the Party's and government's work or winning over, uniting with and educating persons in religious circles."

At present there are individual locales where these conditions do not apply. Everything (including those things that are properly the affairs of religion itself) is under the control of the cadres. These cadres do not understand religion, do not understand the thoughts and feelings of religious believers and do not respect religious traditions. People in religious circles dare say nothing and so these cadres act in many ways which are injurious to religious believers and force them into the arms of bad elements and enemies, causing patriotic religious groups to lose many of the masses.

For example, in some places "patriotic pledges", "Eight Not-Allowed", "Ten Not-Allowed" are perpetrated under false use of the name of religious groups. This is extremely unfavorable to uniting believers around patriotic religious bodies. Forcing such unpatriotic things that lack a mass base upon patriotic religious bodies can only cause believing masses to look down upon persons in patriotic religious circles. A quick end should be made of these practices. Of course, if patriotic pledges contain no anti-religious content or language, if believers have been consulted and have accepted them and if they have a mass base, then that is another story.

China's enemies overseas say that our religions are officially run and some people in

China think that is the way it should be. They claim that people in religious circles should not be allowed to be in charge of their religion, for only then can the Party lead. The leadership of the Party consists in communicating the Party's correct line and policies to the masses; it is leadership with a mass base which is thoroughly implemented by reserving to the masses their duties and rights.

Some "leaders" in religious circles do not represent the legal rights and interests of those circles. They know how to curry favor, they seem to act on whatever is said and are very willing to accept leadership, but their actions do not function as bridges. Rather they increase the estrangement from the Party and cause the cadres to be isolated. If cadres want to unite the believers, they should not despise religious leaders who love religion, nor should they blindly welcome and depend on religious leaders who do not love religion, because it is their love of religion that gives these leaders their mass base. For cadres to rely on leaders who do not love religion and distance themselves from religion-loving leaders in order to make their work easier can in the end only do damage to the work. There is a great need today to help church leaders not to distance themselves from the masses and to have more of a mass character.

Comrade Deng Xiaoping has said: "All levels of our leadership organs are engaged in supervising things they should have no part in; they handle them poorly or not at all. These things simply need definite regulations and can then be delegated to commercial, business or social units, allowing them to deal with such things themselves according to democratic centralism. These things could be handled very well, but bring them all to Party organs, to Central departments, and they become very difficult to handle. No one has the magical power to handle difficult and unfamiliar things. It can be said that this is one of the root causes of the bureaucratism peculiar to ourselves these days." This seems very appropriate to reforming our religious work.

Finally, I would like to say that this Document is an expression of the Party's absolute resolve to implement the religious policy, but it is not the only expression.

In the recent Constitutional revision, those articles affecting religion are a concentrated expression of the spirit of the Party Central Committee. I was a member of the Commission on Constitutional Revision. Looking over the large amount of materials from the two years of meetings of the Commission, I find that there were many on the Commission who supported the proposal to retain the wording of the 1978 Constitution on religion ("freedom to propagate atheism"), and some of these were important cadres or well-known scholars. But the Party Central supported returning things to normal, so that as the drafts of the revised Constitution appeared, the 1978 wording on religion had been removed. The Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council wrote to the Commission expressing support for the draft put forward by religious circles. This was in line with the spirit of the Central Committee. It is especially worth noting that a certain tone which can easily lead people to feel that religion is being discriminated against-religion may not be involved in this, religion may not be involved in that-has been eliminated. The whole process reflected the resolve of the Party to uphold truth, return things to normal, implement policy and unite with believers.

I should also point out that the Twelfth Plenum deleted the clause in the draft Party Constitution forbidding Party members to believe in religion. This deletion of course does not imply that the Party is in favor of Party members believing in religion, but it reflects once again the trouble the Party Central has taken to unite with the believing masses, avoid offending believers' feelings and accept the views of religious circles.

These facts attest that with regard to religious questions, the Party Central opposes and has overcome the errors in thinking left over from the Cultural Revolution. Many cadres in every department and district are striving to understand this spirit and to put it into practice, thereby doing well their work of uniting with the believing masses. This makes us very optimistic. It can be affirmed that Document 19, a theoretical document, will, after testing in practice, play a greater and greater role.

I look forward to your comments on what I have said here today.

Talk to government cadres, 1984.

## On Religion as Opiate

In China, religion is primarily a united front matter and is not treated as a life-or-death ideological problem. This view embodies a consistent teaching of Chairman Mao, Premier Zhou and the Central Party Committee: in religion, the central task lies not in "struggling against religion," leading to its weakening and destruction; nor in making atheists of theists; but rather in seeking the common ground while respecting differences and strengthening political unity with the masses who are believers, while placing differences in matters of belief among the people within the scope of mutual respect. As Premier Zhou said in 1957: "Everyone can support socialism, atheist or theist alike ... people's ideas are multifarious. So long as their activities do not hinder political life or economic production, we should not interfere in their affairs." This view, which lifts up the united front in religious work, must be linked to a deep understanding among the people of the rootedness of religion in the masses of the people, religion's affinity to ethnic minority peoples, its international ramifications, its continued existence over the long term, and its complexity.

Clearly some who call themselves Marxist-Leninists do not have such an understanding. They treat religion mainly as an alien ideology and unnecessarily exaggerate its alien character, equating it with political reaction. They exaggerate the role of propagating atheism. They assume this as a matter of 'course and make up crude atheist and anti-religion propaganda. They deal with the people's requests to hold religious activities by use of administrative measures. All these things offend the religious sentiments of the masses. These people think setting limits on and weakening religion is a "good thing," when actually it only serves to create an uneasy relationship between cadres and the masses, causes the Party and government to lose the good opinion of the people and damages the interests of the united front and the Party.

As regards China, following the restoration of order after the Cultural Revolution, the critique of "leftist" errors and the study of Central Party Document 19 (1982), the number of those who maintained the latter view and methods has been greatly reduced. We now see the appearance of a new kind of relationship between the cadres and the masses: a new common language which cadres in religious work and believers have found through their goals of improving economic production, enriching the nation and revitalizing China, has replaced the former antagonism between those who wanted limits and those who were against them. People have found that believers are the same as everyone else, with the addition of faith and some religious activities. Believers are also concerned about economic production and making a living, about the prosperity of the nation, about the development of young people. Thus, as long as suitable care is shown for the special character of believers, and there is cooperation in production, the common language will be greatly increased and clashes can be completely avoided.

It should be mentioned here that citizens who are religious believers are also normal citizens. Some scholars of religion inappropriately term all believers "religionists." People who make an 'ideology' of religion, who narrowly reject common sense and

science, who understand and deal with everything in terms of religion, are actually very small in number. In terms of ideology, the vast majority of China's religious believers are patriots at the very least. This is more in line with the facts and in line with the Central Committee's assessment (as in Document 19).

In order to further reduce the number of those who hold the inappropriate viewpoint and apply the erroneous methods mentioned above, I would like to offer some views on a statement by Marx. Some people have exaggerated the importance of this statement to an inappropriate level. I refer to the statement "religion is an opiate of the people." This statement has been taken out of the context of the surrounding text as well as being isolated from the whole body of writings by Marx, Engels and Lenin on religion. They speak of it as Marx's definition of religion, as pointing to the very nature of religion, as an idea original to Marx, as the nucleus or marrow of the Marxist view of religion, and so on. They think it is a surefire formula for understanding and dealing with any religious question. Actually, Marx speaks of religion as opiate only once, almost glancing over it, and that was in his youth, when he spoke grandly of alienation.

The idea that religion is an opiate of the people is by no means original to Marx. In Germany alone, several decades before Marx mentioned it, those intellectuals I will mention below (and there may be others) published similar views. Some even used similar wording.

1) PT. von Holbach in his *Le Christianisme dévoilé* (1761): "Religion is the art of making men drunk with enthusiasm, in order to hinder them from attending to the evils with which those who rule them overwhelm them here below. With the help of the invisible powers with which one threatens them, one compels them to bear the misery in silence with which the powerful afflict them, one makes them hope that, if they consent to be unhappy in this world, they will be more happy in another."

2) Goethe criticized the German revivalist F.W. Krummacher's volume of sermons, *Blick ins Reich der Gnade* (1828), calling them "narcotic sermons."

3) Hegel (1770-1831) in his *Religionsphilosophie* compared Indian religion to a man "decayed in body and spirit, who finds his existence grown dull and insufferable" and is therefore at pains to create for himself with opium "a dreaming world and crazy happiness."

4) Feuerbach in the notes to the first edition of his *Pierre Bayle* in 1838, wrote that "the man therefore who charms with enticing and flattering words of eternal joys and threatens separation from himself with the intimidating words of eternal hell, used methods of compulsion ... he administers opium to him to extract from him his word of honor in a condition where the passions of fear or hope have clouded his vision."

5) In his *The Nature of Christianity* (1841), Feuerbach again spoke of the "narcotic influences" of Christian language, and also of the "halo of sanctity" with which Christianity surrounds marriage in order to cloud the reason.



6) Heinrich Heine, in the fourth book of his discussion with Ludwig Borne (1840): "As the individual opens his arteries in despair, and seeks in death a refuge from the tyranny of the Caesars, so the great mass plunged into asceticism, into the doctrines of mortification . . .of the Nazarene religion. In order once and for all to thrust from itself the misery of life at that time . . . in order to number their aching heads with organ-tones and the tolling of bells." "For men for whom earth has nothing more to offer, heaven is invented ... Hail to this invention! Hail to a religion which poured for a suffering race of men some sweet narcotic drops into their bitter cup, spiritual opium, a few drops of love and hope and faith." Ten years later he said: "When a little gray dust is poured into my fearful burning wounds, and then the pain at once ceases, shall not one say that this is the same calming power which shows its effectiveness in religion? There is more relationship between opium and religion than most men dream."

7) In 1841 when he was still a theology professor in Berlin, Bruno Bauer wrote in his essay *Der Christliche Staat und unsere Zeit*: "The theological organization in the most Christian State was able to 'carry matters so far through its opium-like influence' that it finds no more trace of resistance and all the instincts of free humanity ... are lulled to sleep."

8) The next year he wrote that: "Religion in its opium haze speaks of a new condition hereafter."

9) Edgar Bauer, the younger brother of Bruno, in his short story *Freedom and Myself* (1842) wrote: "Others drug themselves with religion, they would wish to enter the seventh heaven, and in so doing forget the earth."

10) Moses Hess in *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz*, written in 1843, ranks intoxicants, opium, religion and brandy side by side and says: "Religion is well able . . . to make tolerable the unhappy consciousness of servitude ... Just as opium does good service in painful illnesses, faith in the reality of unreality and in the unreality of reality can indeed give the sufferer a passive happiness."

Clearly, Marx did no more than that quote a phrase often used by enlightened people in intellectual and religious circles of the day. To say that this phrase is an innovation of Marx, that he was born with it, is hard to accept. To say that it is the nucleus of Marxist views on religion, not only seems to theorists a kind of unfortunate error in common sense, but lowers the Marxist religious view to a level long achieved by bourgeois intellectuals and enlightened religious thinkers.

Marx and Engels lived in a class society, so let us begin with a discussion of religion in a society made up of antagonistic classes. Religion is a complex social phenomenon that plays many roles. Its role as an opiate in society, its narcotic role, the role it has played to obliterate the spirit of rebellion among the toiling masses, is, of course, a fact. But this is only one of the roles it plays, certainly not its only role-and by no means its main role under all circumstances.

Opium causes people to sink into a stupor. In Western countries today, among certain reactionaries (for example, those high up in Christian fundamentalist bodies in the U.S. who call themselves the "moral majority"), religion is manipulated through preaching that fans the fervor of the believers and draws them toward the extreme right, so that they become supporters of the political forces of reaction and tools to attack the masses. This role of religion plainly surpasses by far its role as opiate.

Religion often provides the ideology for peasant movements, functioning to connect and motivate the masses. In *The Peasant War in Germany*, Engels commended Muenzer for "spreading revolution, having political religious thinking." "Muenzer's political doctrine followed his revolutionary religious conceptions very closely, and as his theology reached far beyond the current conceptions of his time, so his political doctrine went beyond existing social and political conditions. ... His program, less a compilation of the demands of the then existing plebeians than a genius's anticipation of the conditions for the emancipation of the proletarian element that had just begun to develop among the plebeians, demanded the immediate establishment of the kingdom of God, of the prophesied millennium on earth." Engels believed that the plebeian clergy of the German churches in the middle ages "gave the movement its theorists and ideologists, and many of them, representatives of the plebeians and peasants, died on the scaffold." There are many other examples like this the Taiping Rebellion is one-but it is not necessary to mention them all here. The role played by religion in peasant movements is much greater than what is suggested by the term "opiate."

In some European bourgeois democratic revolutions and even in certain workers' struggles, religion played a similar role. Engels felt that "the Calvinist Reformation served as a banner for the republicans in Geneva, in Holland, and in Scotland, freed Holland from Spain and from the German Empire, and provided the ideological costume for the second act of the bourgeois revolution, which was taking place in England." Marx pointed out that in England, "Cromwell and the English people have borrowed from the Old Testament the speech, passions, and illusions for their bourgeois revolution." Lenin did not propose to view all religion as a monolith. He stressed the internal divisions in the Russian church, "the sectarian movements in Russian Orthodoxy, in many of their aspects, are one of the democratic trends in Russia." He proposed "absorbing them into the democratic socialist party." He said: "We socialists ought to support such movements as this, that the demands of the upright and honest among the clergy be thoroughly realized." Lenin, also pointed out that "the struggles of the democratic and proletarian elements sometimes take the form of the struggle of one religious idea against another." Obviously, under certain conditions, the role played by religion is far different from that played by an opiate.

Today quite a number of religious believers and persons in religious circles support, are involved in, and even serve as leaders of people's democratic movements in the Third World.

In South Korea, many Christians are involved in demonstrations, strikes and protests

to oppose fascism. In Latin America and the Philippines, under the banner of liberation theology, quite a few priests (and some bishops) have lost their lives because of their involvement in mass movements and armed struggle.

It would be forced and implausible when considering class societies with these and many other types of religious phenomena, to explain religion solely in terms of bring an opiate.

Thus a more realistic and objective view would be to admit that in class society, opiate is not a sufficient definition of religion, but rather a role religion may play, and moreover just one of its roles and not by any means its only role.

During the rectification campaign in Yanan, Chairman Mao Said: "Up to now, there are still quite a few people who see isolated words and phrases from the works of Marx and Lenin as ready-made cure-alls, as if having these one can cure any disease without lifting a finger." This is a statement that still has value today.

Lenin had this to say about making definitions: "What is meant by giving a `definition?' It means essentially to bring a given concept within a more comprehensive concept. For example, when I give the definition `an ass is an animal,' I am bringing the concept `ass' within a more comprehensive concept." In the same way, if we want to define religion, we ought first to put it into a broader conception. But opium is simply one of the roles of religion. To make opium the definition of religion is to cover up the comprehensive with the partial and embrace all aspects of religion. Hence the difficulty and bewilderment in trying to use opium as the one explanation of all religious phenomena. People who attempt this find this approach explains very little. At times, they are only fooling themselves as well as others and they treat the many other religious phenomena as if they are hardly worth a glance.

Marx certainly did not call for attacks on and destruction of religion because religion played the role of an opiate in certain circumstances. He felt that the transformation of this world was the only path to eliminating the religious tendency. In the same essay, Marx exhorted people to turn "criticism of the Kingdom of God" into "criticism of the mundane world," and "criticism of theology" into "political criticism." At almost the same time as Marx was writing this (1843), he wrote in another essay that religion was "narrow-mindedness," saying that religion "is not the cause of secular narrow-mindedness, but its manifestation." He disapproved of regarding the overcoming of human religious narrow-mindedness as the path to secular liberation. He said that religious narrow-mindedness could only be overcome by ending secular captivity. Thus, he had no illusions about being able to do away with religious faith, instead he put forth "political liberation" as the prerequisite for human liberation from all fetters, including spiritual ones.

It is the belief of Marxism that as long as humankind is blind to the alienating power of nature and society, it will have no way to grasp its own fate and the emergence and existence of religion is inevitable. In this sense, human religiosity is a normal phenomenon. As long as the natural and social sources for the existence of religion

continue to exist, even if atheism is very well propagated (this is extremely difficult), there will not be many people who will accept it and turn away from religion. If it is poorly propagated, it will stimulate the religious sentiments of the believers and provoke people's outrage on their behalf, as well as giving rise to sympathy for and interest in religion. Would this not function indirectly to help propagate religion? We religious believers do not necessarily agree with these views, but we do rather appreciate them.

If the narcotic function of religion is one of the roles it plays in class society, then it cannot be a sufficient description of religion's roles. In class society, it mainly fulfills the need of the reactionary ruling class to numb and control the masses. When the historical stage of socialism arrives and the exploiting class no longer exists as a class, using the narcotic function of religion for its own ends, how shall we see our way to continuing to define religion as opiate?

What transformations will take place in religion in a socialist society is a new question, one that cannot be answered with recourse to the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The religion of which Marx, Engels and Lenin spoke was the religion of class society. The religion with which Marx and Engels were familiar was primarily that of western European class society, while Lenin knew mainly the religion of Imperial Russia. They did no study of religion in a socialist society.

After liberation in China, each religious group, under the correct leadership of the Party, put a great deal of effort into uniting their respective adherents. On the one hand they eliminated reactionary forces and illegal activities within their religion and undertook religious reformation; on the other hand they led their adherents on the path of patriotic socialism, contributing to the realization of the four modernizations in China and to enlarging the united front internationally. Each of China's religions has undergone a partial qualitative change and has turned onto a course that is healthier and more in harmony with socialist China if we were to say that religion is an opiate of the people in socialist society, just as it is in class society, then those who would say this must speak up-which class is it that needs religion to anesthetize the people? If this is not the case, it functions at most as a kind of self-numbing, not its best use, but no more harmful than banishing melancholy with wine, not something that needs to be opposed or something that we must strive to destroy. Making a political problem of it in order to destroy it might seem a clever plan, but actually will only succeed in losing the sympathy of the people.

We ought to make a distinction between religion as narcotic for self-numbing today with religion as narcotic as it was used in the past by the reactionary ruling classes to control the people. We should recognize that the seriousness of the problem has been greatly reduced. Lumping the two together is, to put it mildly, a slapdash way of theorizing and research, and politically it is still the old business of "class struggle as the key link." In dealing with today's religious questions, this can lead to great harm.

Today, we should pay greater attention to religion's role in exhorting people to do well. This aspect of religion can be beneficial for unity and stability and economic

production in socialist society. If the standard for the united front is not communism but patriotism, people can appreciate that believers' "good behavior" is good for the nation and need not scoff at it simply because they do not begin from a Marxist standpoint. As long as what believers do is acceptable, religion will be more compatible with socialism and we should allow different paths to the same goal.

The Bible says "There is no authority but by act of God" (Rom. 13:1). In the past the KMT used this to control the people, attempting to make them bow down to their rulers. But now, when Christians say this under the people's government, they can no longer be considered reactionary. Rather, it is beneficial to unity and stability. Plainly, religion does not at all function as an opiate in all circumstances. It can play many roles and is not necessarily antagonistic to socialism.

In the Central Committee Document 19 in 1982, the word "opiate" no longer appears and the Party has cast off dogmatism and a doctrinaire approach, beginning instead with the reality of religious phenomena in China's historical stage of socialism. This gives full expression to the fine tradition of seeking truth from facts.

Actually the discussion of religion by proletarian revolutionary leaders like Marx and Engels is very rich. In China, as early as 1950 during the meeting of the CPPCC, Premier Zhou pointed out that with the victory of the revolution, it was not necessary always to emphasize religion as opiate. The important issue in religion now was to isolate and reform the small number of political counter-revolutionaries.

When Marx and others spoke of an opiate, they meant a narcotic, whereas in China we have had a tragic history in which imperialism imposed opium and the Opium War on our people. Our people harbor a particular hatred of opium. The equating of religion to opiate (which some writers have changed to opium) confers on it a criminal nature and relegates religious believers among the people to the status of opium addicts and turns religious leaders into drug dealers. Thus, this equation serves the promotion of ultra-leftism in religious work. Many people still think no more of religion than that it is basically a kind of thought deviation belonging to a certain historical stage.

There are still a lot of people who, though they are not religious believers but atheists, express in their thinking and work the subjective deviation of idealism. Furthermore the results of this kind of deviation are frequently more serious than the results of belief in religion. Not long ago, a scholar of religion once again claimed that the four modernizations could not be realized unless religion was abolished. Some cadres in religious work did not seek to unite believers under the banner of patriotic socialism, but took the prohibition and destruction of religion as their task-these are the inevitable results of a one-sided emphasis on religion as opiate and opium. This is subjective idealist thinking, the result of which is to incite hatred of religion. It is not conducive to unity and stability.

Is religion in fact the only opiate we find today? There are many things that can become opiates of the people. Politics too can bewitch people and function as an opiate.

Some rebel factions during the Cultural Revolution blindly acted on the slogans "three-parts left in everything," and "Carry out what you understand; carry out what you don't understand too." These are good examples of what I mean. A famous writer described his mental state during his time in detention in the so-called "cow shed" this way: "I actually made 'ignorance' the goal of my transformation, admitted that I had done not one good thing my whole life, that everything I had written was `poison', and I really believed that only the few `model operas' were art. Settling for irrelevancies, I was completely taken in by the logic of the rebel factions and the more I thought about it, the more I thought the rebel factions were right - I was a criminal." Many religious believers would be glad they had not succumbed to a narcotic to that extent. In saying this, I am not trying to smear politics; I just want to point out that when we call something an opiate, we have not exhausted the possibilities of that thing. An individual is always subject to human weakness; it is difficult to avoid subjective errors.

The Central Party Committee has done a meticulous study of the basic understanding and policy on religious questions during China's socialist period, summing up the experiences and lessons of thirty years' since 1949, making complete proposal for theory, guiding policy and policy. Further, it points out that whether this question can be adequately dealt with is of vital significance for national stability and ethnic unity, for the development of international exchanges and resistance I infiltration by hostile forces overseas. This Document has bee of great help to me and I am still studying and absorbing it. Toda the most I can do is raise a few questions for us to study and resolve together.

A talk with friends outside the Church, 1985.

**FROM THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF BISHOP K.H. TING**

**Talks on Theology and the Church**

## **On the Thirty-Sixth Article of the Constitution**

Following a nationwide critique of the extreme leftist line that dominated our country during the Cultural Revolution, order was restored. Our people care about socialist democracy and law. Together with legal experts they have taken part in two years of painstaking effort, including four months of discussion and consultation. Now at long last the Chinese people have a new and appropriate Constitution.

Because I am on the Commission for Constitutional Revision of the National People's Congress (NPC), I took part in the entire process of drafting this new Constitution. I would like to report to my co-workers and fellow Christians on the formulation of the article dealing with religion (the Thirty-sixth Article).

Long before the Commission was formed, we Christian delegates to the NPC and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in concert with leaders of other religions, had already made a formal representation to the NPC and CPPCC. This representation advocated the deletion from the 1978 Constitution of the "leftist" wording of the article on religion. In effect, we opposed the statement in this article of "freedom to propagate atheism," without a corresponding statement of the freedom to propagate theism. We felt it unnecessary to state that there was "freedom not to believe in religion," because the concept of "religious freedom" includes the freedom not to believe. "Freedom of speech" does not require a statement of "freedom not to speak," nor would the "freedom of correspondence" require a statement of "freedom not to do so." We felt that the wording of the Eighty-eighth Article of the 1954 Constitution, "Citizens shall have the freedom of religious belief," a model of simplicity and clarity, should be restored.

These proposals seemed extremely fair and reasonable to us. However, because of the long-standing influence of "leftist" thinking, our proposals met with some opposition, and some of those who opposed us were people of considerable status and influence. They advocated retaining the wording of the article on religion found in the 1978 Constitution.

Happily, religious circles and believers across the country commended our proposal. It also garnered the support of intellectual, political and legal circles, as well as government cadres concerned about socialist democracy and law. The Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council (RAB) had given their opinion to the Commission in writing, supporting our proposals. This fact in itself is enough to illustrate that the RAB's concern was to implement the policy of religious freedom and protect the legal rights and interests of each religion. People overseas attacked them by saying that their aim was the destruction of religion. This is too superficial and ignorant.

We know that since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress, the Central Committee has resolutely restored order and implemented each policy. Vis-a-vis religion, it has resolutely overcome subjectivism and dogmatism and implemented the policy of



religious freedom. This situation prevails throughout the nation. The Commission, too, has been resolved to restore order and eradicate "leftist" views and formulations in religion, and adopt all fair and reasonable views put forward by religious circles. My co-workers and fellow Christians will certainly have noted that the draft constitution given to the people for discussion restores the wording of the 1954 Constitution with regard to religion. Adherents of all religions in China experience this as the lifting of a heavy burden and a surge of heartfelt joy.

During the more than two years of constitutional revision, we leaders of the China Christian Council and of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China put forward many views that were given due consideration by the Commission. We can say that those views related to the religious policy were all adopted. Our Christian compatriots in Hong Kong and Macau also held a forum and expressed their valuable views on the draft constitution.

In the very first version of the draft, wording appeared to the effect that religion should not be involved in politics, education or marriage. People who are not adherents of any religion frequently lack sensitivity in this area, and have no appreciation of how this phrase "should not be involved in" grates on the ears of religious believers. We in religious circles had a responsibility to reflect this situation to the Commission and we did so. The Commission valued our opinions, and after studying the issue, avoided this type of wording. Incidents such as this show us the spirit of democratic consultation as it is expressed in our national political life. At the same time, we see that you cannot have consultation by looking at only one side of an issue. Thus we should actively take the initiative to express our views, so that consultation can take place. If we did not make our views known, the final version of the Constitution might have retained some unsuitable wordings.

Another example: my co-workers and fellow Christians might recall that the draft constitution sent out for a four-month period of discussion by all the people contained a statement to the effect that no one had the right to use religion to undertake counterrevolutionary activities. This is of course correct. However, religion is not the only means to counterrevolutionaries' hands they can also turn speech and publications to their own ends. Today -- the vast majority of believers in all our religions are patriotic. Why should counterrevolutionaries only be mentioned in connection with religion? Our Buddhist friends raised this issue and persons in other religions felt their views had merit. We appealed to the Commission to delete this phrase. They duly considered our view and, with the agreement of the majority of Commission members, it was decided to delete this phrase. This is yet another expression of the spirit of democratic consultation.

The present Constitution stipulates that religious bodies and religious affairs shall not be under foreign domination. This is powerful support by our nation's people for the realization of independence by Chinese Catholicism and for the realization of self-government, self-support and self-propagation by Chinese Protestantism; an expression of care for our newly born self-run churches. It cannot be made any clearer. What is being opposed here is "domination" from outside; it in no way affects us in normal

exchanges on a basis of equality with international religious circles. We believe that only an independent and self-governing Chinese Church can truly benefit the international church, and in like manner, only such a church can benefit from the international church. Some people overseas have made groundless statements that this sentence in the Constitution is meant to prohibit Chinese churches from international contacts. Perhaps they do not understand the meaning of "domination?"

I have taken part in the whole process of constitutional revision and I deeply feel that the highest leadership of our nation are resolved to implement the policy of religious freedom, to enable the believers of each religion to contribute to the nation with easy minds and hearts. Because China is a vast and populous country, because of the confusion "leftist" things have caused in people's thinking in former years, thorough implementation of the spirit of religious freedom at every level, in every department and corner, cannot be done without obstacles. However, since the central leadership is so resolved, we can be optimistic, knowing that our efforts at implementing policy and striving for socialist democracy and rule of law are not in vain. This Constitution represents the interests and views of the people of the whole nation. We must respect it, cherish it and protect it, and oppose anyone and anything that would offend against it.

1983.

## **A Look Back at the Way We Have Come**

With the passage of time, it is good to look back and see where we have come from.

In the 1950s and 60s, Chinese Christianity took three steps which attracted worldwide attention: 1) it upheld patriotism and achieved self-government, self-support and self-propagation; 2) it started Nanjing Union Theological Seminary to train new workers for the church; and 3) it broke out of its denominational fetters and achieved union.

One important thing we did after the Cultural Revolution was to create a Chinese Christian church affairs organ called the China Christian Council. Our main consideration was that in order to make the church well run, we must pay attention to church affairs. The Three-Self organization promoted patriotism and self-government, self-support and self-propagation, which were essential, but our church had a great deal of work to do in the area of church affairs also. Such work did not fall within the purview of the Three-Self organization as it was conceived and it would not have been able to do it well. The establishment of the CCC as separate from the TSPM was an announcement that we could not be content with simply running the church ourselves, we had to run it well. We must be not only self-governed, but well-governed; not only self-supported, but well-supported; and not only must we do propagation ourselves, we must do it well. Just as "red" becomes "expert" through practice and politics become professional in the same way, patriotism and Three-Self must be realized in running the church well. Running the church well is bound to attract more people to the work and this will increase the scope of unity.

For Three-Self patriotism to be implemented in running the church well was a new step some ten years ago. Establishing the CCC was the organizational expression of this step. This was an important step; with this, leadership emerged in Chinese Christian church affairs and the work and ministry of running the church well began to develop.

Secondly, we adjusted our view of Christians overseas and rejected exclusivism. When you mentioned a missionary in the 1950s and 60s, you had to add "imperialist" before the name. We were really a bit self-satisfied then and had no international relationships to speak of. We did not use the term ecumenical church nor did we say the Chinese Church was part of the church ecumenical. To say such things seemed suspect, as if the speaker was not firmly anti-imperialist. The main sign of change in this aspect took place when the CCC became part of the World Council of Churches. This is not to say that imperialism did not invade China, nor that in its invasion of China it did not make use of religion and missionaries, but in judging events and people we must seek truth from facts and not go overboard.

Thirdly, theological thinking broadened. This was not very obvious, but a very important beginning was made. In general terms, sadly, there seems to be only one genuinely important doctrine in Chinese Christianity: If you believe in Christ, then you

are justified in God's eyes; if you do not believe in Christ, then you are not justified in God's eyes. From a shallow insistence on this point have evolved many views contrary to common sense: So and so believes, so though he is counter-revolutionary and a traitor, he will go to heaven. Imperialist aggression is bad, but the aggressors were Christians, Justified in God's eyes. The objects of their aggression were non-Christians, not justified in God's eyes, so the objects of aggression got what they deserved-it was God's punishment. There are not many people today who would actually say this, but the idea is still around. Notice to what extent excessive emphasis on one point of faith can turn right and wrong upside down. According to this point of view, God is well aware that the majority of humankind is bound for the eternal flames of hell because they are unbelievers. Yet day and night without ceasing he keeps creating human beings. What kind of view of God is that? Where do we begin to talk about God's mercy?

We know that Paul spoke of justification by faith because the Pharisees attacked Christ and his disciples for not keeping the law. They stressed that in order to be saved, one had to observe each and every Jewish law-circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, all the dietary restrictions and so on. The doctrine of justification by faith arose to counter the Pharisee's reliance on observance of the law as the way to salvation. Justification by faith greatly enlarged the ranks of those who received the grace of salvation. Only in this way could those outside Judaism-the Gentiles receive saving grace. Only then could Christianity evolve from a Jewish sect into a world religion.

Later Martin Luther, too, stressed justification by faith. This was because he opposed the Roman hierarchy and their methods of oppressing the masses, such as the selling of indulgences.

When we study a doctrine, we should ask what it stands in opposition to as well as what it says. There are many doctrines in Christianity besides justification by faith: the never-ending creation of God; the Incarnation, Christ's resurrection; the renewal of creation; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which bestows wisdom; the Beatitudes; the greatest commandment, which is to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself; to do unto others as you would have them do unto you; not to be served, but to serve. Paul said that there are faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love-love is a higher virtue than faith. Why not stress these? If Chinese Christianity esteems only one doctrine, this doctrine could easily lead to the contradiction between belief and unbelief, which could lead to endless divisions, damaging the nation's stability. This cannot be God's will, can it?

The situation is changing and a theological renewal is underway. A growing number of co-workers no longer highlight belief/unbelief in their preaching, or speak only of heaven and hell, or of who is saved and who is not. Intuitive pastors who are responsible toward the people do not talk about countless upright people going to hell.

Today, a greater number of the messages being preached from China's pulpits are ethical ones. Religion and ethics cannot be separated. A religion that says nothing about ethics is a very primitive and base religion. Sadly, in Chinese Christianity we still have

people who, in order to highlight the contradiction between belief and unbelief, actually reject ethics and promote antinomianism. They make opposing camps of saving grace and ethics. On the excuse of lifting up the grace of salvation, they stoop to saying that ethics is unimportant. Are they unaware of the great ethical content of the Bible? Six of the ten commandments have to do with regulating ethical behavior.

Theology has to do with faith and on convictions held deep in human hearts. Adjustment is therefore slow; ethics, which enriches faith, develops only gradually. But theological changes are very fundamental changes and have already begun in Chinese Christianity. They deserve our attention.

Fourthly, along with changes in theological thinking, social concerns are being raised in Chinese Christianity. The Amity Foundation emerged as a response to the times ten years ago. More and more provincial and municipal churches are running specialized social service organizations, taking it as their responsibility to alleviate the people's hardships. We do not hear much talk attacking the so-called social gospel any more. Recently we held a national meeting to exchange experiences in church social welfare work.

Fifthly, at present, we are changing our view of Christians and meeting points or what are termed house churches, which are outside the Three-Self organization and adjusting our relationships with them. The majority of these meeting points are also self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. Those that identify with forces overseas operating behind a cloak of Christianity represent a minority. There are many reasons why these Christians and house churches remain outside the Three-Self organization; for example, (1) [the churches] are too far away and travel is inconvenient; (2) they are not used to what they perceive as different beliefs and rituals at the churches or to the sort of preaching that is done; (3) they feel there are not enough religious activities at the churches; (4) they have problems with the pastors at the church; (5) they were hurt by the leftist line and so they are afraid even now; (6) certain actions of Three-Self or the government have earned them the disaffection of the people and hurt their image. To this day some people look down on them and their defiance has grown; (7) discord sown by overseas influence.

Those who serve Jesus Christ as Lord are our brothers and sisters in the Lord and we have no reason to exclude them. We should help them and serve them. In order to avoid forcing our views on others or forcing union, in order that one day we can consciously choose to be one and become one body, we have suggested to the Religious Affairs Bureau that permission to register churches and meeting points should not be contingent upon being part of or respecting the TSPM and CCC. They have agreed to this. Support of Three-Self is not one of the six requirements for registration. We do not make use of political pressure to force unity; we seek only that all churches and meeting points that carry on normal religious activities can enjoy a legal existence.

There are people in China who have very little or no sympathy for this step we are taking. Would-be infiltrators from overseas are also busy making up rumors, sowing

discord and deepening divisions, and so this step is an arduous one. But it is in line with Jesus' prayer that we be one and with the desires of believers. We must then strive to undertake it.

In order to enlarge the scope of unity, I would like to mention here the work of so-called "private meeting points" in applying to the government for registration. Registration can be a way of bringing "underground" meetings points "above ground." It is not good for any nation to have religious believers who must believe and meet secretly. This is no demonstration of freedom of religious belief. "Above-ground," these believers are visible to others and to the government, who can then feel at ease with the situation. The believers can feel secure too. The regulations for registration announced by the Religious Affairs Bureau say that a church or meeting point need only fulfill six simple and easily met requirements in order to apply for and receive permission. This shows that the government is not using registration to reduce the number of churches and meeting points or to make trouble for them but that it wants to allow all normal religious activities to be public and legal.

To tell the truth, to divide normal religious activities into those which have received permission and those which have not, or into underground and above-ground, or public and private smacks of the old Soviet Union style, not that of socialism with Chinese characteristics. If we can do the work of registering religious venues well in China, so that all religious activities can have public and legal status, that will be achievement enough. This is religious work with Chinese socialist characteristics. I am deeply hopeful we can achieve this.

Mr. Luo Guanzong and I requested a meeting with the Head of the legal office of the State Council on the question of registration. The Bureau Head said that registration was simply registration and should be separate from regular work. The registration regulations did not set out how regular work should be carried on. Such work might be very good, but it should not be attached to the regulations. This would add to what was subsumed under the work of registration. We should consider the intent and spirit of these remarks.

There are those who would take advantage of the opportunity presented by registration to have the qualifications of all clergy co-workers within their boundaries reviewed by the TSPM and CCC. This is unacceptable. First of all, this extends the work of registration and puts difficulties in its way. To insist that some of the "private" meeting points that do not recognize the two bodies have their clergy reviewed by them is simply coercion. Secondly, this is a huge job-where will the two bodies find the strength to screen such a large number of people unknown to them? Thirdly, since we have not yet succeeded in enlarging the scope of unity, to set ourselves up as arbiters of other people's qualifications would be to put ourselves in the position of increasing the attacks on unity. The responsibility of the TSPM and CCC in applying for government registration is to encourage and assist churches and meeting points in the process. We should provide a channel for communication by promptly reflecting to the government problems and opinions on the church's side.

One can hardly believe that there are still those who oppose registration on grounds of being "citizens of heaven who obey only God and not man (sic)." But these people did not refuse to be counted as Chinese during the national census. If they have nothing to do with the government, does that mean they will not carry identity cards? The church is a spiritual organization, it is true, but on earth it is also a people's organization. I was recently shown an American publication exhorting Chinese Christians to resist registration in similar terms. If we adopt a closed-door approach to registration and throw difficulties in the way of the process, we will be doing just what these anti-China groups overseas want.

The five steps described above are patriotic and church-loving; they all make Christianity more compatible with socialism. They have been possible for two reasons; (1) because the government has restored order after the Cultural Revolution and undertaken a critique of the ultra-leftist line and (2) because the time was ripe. Christians found them reasonable and acceptable and commended and supported them.

Looking at these five steps today, we find their common point in the rejection of the philosophy of struggle. They are about love, reconciliation and unity. They enlarge our unity and are pleasing to the believers.

In the Book of Revelation, the Holy Spirit instructs John to write a letter to seven churches, the first being to the church in Ephesus. The letter praises the church for its toil and patient endurance against evildoers, its hatred for the works of the Nicolaitans and its ability to discern false apostles. All of this is good. But the Spirit also accuses the church in Ephesus of having abandoned the love it had at first. When a church loses its love, it should remember from what it has fallen, repent and do the works it did at first. I think our Chinese Church can find great revelation from the Spirit's teaching to the church in Ephesus, hear the Spirit's demands and in love, build up the body of Christ.

I would like to mention one other topic here, and that is the government's exhortation to "strengthen supervision in religious affairs." This wording has caused anxiety among many Christians, who feel that the policy has changed. Let me share with you how I see it.

(1) In principle, supervision is a good thing, not a bad one. Industry, agriculture, transportation, commerce, hospitals, schools and libraries all require supervision and religion is no different. An order of service to be followed in worship is also a form of supervision. When we say run the church well, we could also be saying supervise the church well. We should not oppose supervision of religious affairs.

(2) When we speak of strengthening supervision of religious affairs, supervisors do not refer only to government religious affairs departments. Patriotic religious bodies of all religions, including Three-Self and church affairs groups from the national to the grassroots level, all have a supervisory duty; all are supervisors.

(3) The objects of this strengthening of supervision and oversight, are the

organizations at all levels from national to grassroots of venues for religious activities, but also government religious affairs departments at all levels.

(4) Supervisors must strengthen themselves. This goes for government religious affairs departments as well as for the TSPM and CCC of the Christian Church at all levels and for grassroots churches and meeting points. In recent years there has been an increase in contradictions within the church and we should propose that these be settled through consultation, allowing believers patriotism and love for the church to be expressed in taking part in this supervisory work.

(5) Government supervision of religion is mainly concerned with politics and the law. It supervises activities that transgress the Constitution, laws and policies; it does not supervise church affairs. In church affairs, the government should respect the faith of the church and the good tradition and system of democratic supervision which the church has formed over time.

(6) Supervision should be done according to the law. There should be no criminal actions such as beatings and arrests, seizure of Bibles, hymnals or church property, or arbitrary collection of fees or imposition of fines.

(7) Church personnel should follow church regulations. Legal supervision of church affairs does not include decisions on church personnel being made outside the church. If the government has views on church personnel, the church should be amenable to considering and consulting on them. Church finances should also be handled this way. Regulation 145 of the State Council says, "The property and finances of a religious venue shall be under the supervision and use of the supervisory group of that venue."

(8) The national TSPM and CCC, which has experience in church affairs, should play a greater role in leading and guiding in church affairs. This will be beneficial in strengthening supervision, but this is in no way to negate the principle of consultation.

(9) Regulation 145 of the State Council contains clear regulations on the supervision of venues for religious activities. We should study and respect it.

I would be happy to have your responses to the personal views I have set out here.

Speech to the Joint Standing Committees of the CCC and TS PM. April 24, 1995, Nanjing.



## **A Profound Christian Question**

As a Bishop, who is also President of the CCC and Chairperson of the TSPM, I frequently receive letters from people in churches all around the country. Some of my correspondents write that they are worried by the idea that through God's justice, believers will go to heaven while non-believers will go to hell. They are upset over this, yet they do not dare to bring it out into the open. I do.

Justice is an ethical concept. From childhood I knew that justice should be done in our world. But those hypocritical Pharisees in Judaism (Jesus often called them hypocrites) defined "justice" in ways ordinary people can hardly fathom. For example, the commandment to keep the Sabbath. It was a commandment originally imbued with the spirit of humanism, giving people one day in seven as a day of rest, as well as a day when they could remember God. But the Pharisees came up with all sorts of strict observances to trip people up: all activities must cease on that day, even how long a distance one might walk was regulated (one faction said you could only walk as far as you could throw a stone). Harvesting wheat was also forbidden and if one of your sheep fell into a well you were forbidden to save it. It is said that some of the Pharisee sects had several thousand of these regulations. Those who observed them were said to be just; otherwise one offended against God's commandment on the Sabbath. Jesus was against the Pharisees. He said they "tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others, " but "do not practice what they teach." Paul was loyal to Jesus. His mention of justification by faith in Romans and Galatians was meant to free people from these fetters, to liberate human nature. Paul wrote of the principle of justification by faith in order to allow people to throw off the Pharisees' inhumane strictures on circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, and so on. Only in this way could Christianity break out of the Jewish restrictions and spread to the non-Jewish peoples of the Mediterranean. Only in this way could Christianity evolve from a small Jewish sect into a world religion.

European Catholicism of the Middle Ages also fettered people. It imposed a strict hierarchy on the people and introduced the sale of indulgences. When there was a death in the family and people were grieving, the church announced that indulgences could be bought for a fee. The time of suffering the dead person's soul would have to endure in purgatory was reduced by the amount of indulgences bought. More indulgences meant less suffering. To attack this system oppressing the people, Martin Luther once again lifted high the banner of justification by faith. The church he founded is still known in Chinese as the "church of justification by faith."

Historically, therefore, when advanced religious people like Paul and Martin Luther put forward justification by faith, it was to extend justice, oppose the dark forces of church authority, cleanse the church, simplify religion and seize freedom for the people. The original meaning of justification by faith was progressive. It was a banner of human liberation. Its goal was never to consign people to hell.

Many foreign missionaries came to China in the 19th and 20th centuries and many

of them were anxious to attract people to Christianity. They joined justification by faith to the concept of paradise and hell. And many Chinese, anxious to enter heaven, accepted this. The message of justification by faith was thereby changed: God did not care if your actions were just. God would not ask if you had been selfish or if you had sacrificed for others. God cared only if you believed or not. If you had been a believer in your life, then no matter how selfish or cruel you might have been, you would go to heaven when you died and enjoy eternal blessings. But if you had been an unbeliever, no matter how much you had done for others or for society, after death you went to hell, where the flames burned for eternity. These people advocated antinomianism, saying God cared nothing for people's good deeds. In this way they were denying the ethical content of the Bible and making God into a selfish (those who believe in me are good; those who do not are evil) God who makes no distinction between truth and falsehood, good and evil. This, of course, is not the view of God we find in the Bible.

There is a growing number of Chinese Christians today who find it hard to accept this idea of faith without works. As one pastor told me in his letter: "My conscience will not permit me to continue to say that non-believers will go to hell." The reason is simple. Looking at the many people like Zhang Side and Lei Feng who did not accept Christianity, yet sacrificed their lives for others, he has seen that they are of noble character. How can we tolerate the idea that they are now in hell? My attitude to all those co-workers and fellow Christians who have written to me, unafraid to tell me openly about the doubts they have hidden deep in their hearts of faith, is one of sympathy and understanding; I do not condemn them.

I believe that the God shown forth in Christ is a God of love. This attribute of love comes before and above all other attributes of God. This view of God does not allow me to make God so cruel and brutal that God could send millions of people to the eternal flames of hell. Imagine how many new lives are brought into this world each day at a single maternity hospital in one of our cities and the indescribable joy of their parents. God certainly knows that many of these will not be believers, yet every moment he creates more new lives. If what awaits most of them some decades along the road is eternal hellfire, then God is not a God of love. This is a God more like the King of Hell feared by so many in Chinese folk religions. Have we Christians been influenced by such beliefs, that we think of our God in this way?

Einstein pointed out that the development from a religion of fear to one of ethics is an important step forward in the evolutionary history of religion.

The four Gospels tell the life of Jesus and from them we know that though Jesus sometimes spoke of paradise and of hell, he never made belief/ unbelief the standard for whether a person went to heaven or hell. Read chapter 25 of Matthew's gospel beginning at verse 31. Here we see that when the Son of Man comes in his glory, He will ask what we have done for others; for in visiting those who are sick or in prison, in feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty, in clothing the naked, in welcoming the stranger, we are doing these things to Him.

In the last judgment described here, God does not ask whether we were believers or unbelievers. He asks what we did for the impoverished. This is to say that God cares about ethics. The heart of our God is so broad, so filled with love that He could not send some people to hell simply because they did not believe in Him.

This is an important passage of Scripture. There are still Christians in China who do not value this passage, who pass over it without pause. For over forty years, countless people in our country have been working in a great project to alleviate poverty, to help the people out of poverty, to achieve a comfortable standard of living and move on to being wealthy. Is this not one with what we find in this biblical passage? It is only right that we Christians also strive for this.

Throughout the Bible, Old and New Testaments, there are innumerable passages that lift up ethics. Six of the ten commandments are concerned with ethics. All of the proverbs "exhort people to do good." Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus does not set redemption and service at odds with each other here. He says "and" not "but," meaning that giving oneself for many is also to serve. We should not use redemption to cancel out serving, nor should we use serving to deny redemption. In our pulpits and theological seminaries, we should preach the whole gospel, according to the Bible.

There are many other doctrines in Christianity besides justification by faith: God is love, the continuing process of God's creation, the Incarnation, the renewal of creation which comes with Christ's resurrection, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that brings wisdom, the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest commandments of love for God and loving one's neighbor as oneself, of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, of serving rather than being served. Paul said that there are faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. The virtue of love is higher than the virtue of faith. How can we ignore this? The biblical message is so very rich for us. If we highlight one doctrine and ignore its historical context, thus playing up the contradiction between belief and unbelief, this will surely damage the unity of our people and lead to endless divisions. What kind of witness will be able to make then?

It is in lifting high morality that the excellence of Christianity and other religions lies. China is an ancient civilization, a nation of morality and ritual. For Chinese intellectuals especially, a discussion of ethics will be more appreciated than a discussion of paradise and will be more likely to make the religious message heard.

Speech at the North China All Church Meeting, 1996.

**FROM THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF BISHOP K.H. TING**

**Sermons**

## Life Should Have a Mission

Another semester is here. We welcome back those students who have spent the summer at home; even more do we welcome back those students who have been away doing field study the last six months. And we especially welcome our more than sixty new students.

Take a moment to consider that here in Nanjing, we have gathered over 200 co-workers, classmates and others who busy themselves endlessly providing food, shelter, cleaning and health services, going to class and worship, constructing new buildings, plus all sorts of other activities-what are we doing, after all? What is it we have dedicated ourselves to? We say that we are responding to God's call, but what is it God is doing? Why has God called us? Why is responding to this call worthwhile? I think that the story of the angel appearing to Mary found in Luke 1:26-38 has something to tell us.

Goethe said: "Dear friends, the tree of life is ever green, but theory is gray." The story of the angel appearing to Mary is vivid and moving, full of poetry, as evergreen as the tree of life, while what I am saying is gray theory. But I believe that in saying what he did, Goethe's intention was not to diminish the importance of theory, but because with theory as its foil, analysis, synthesis, and guide, the tree of life will appear even greener, more attractive, more understandable, and will moreover produce even more trees of life. We in Seminary must both foster the spiritual life as if it were the tree of life, so that it may grow greener, and study theory, to know and water this tree, so that it can grow and mature.

Theory helps us to take a broad view of history. This means we temporarily set aside all the minor matters and look first at the overall sweep of history, understanding incidents as part of the whole. Viewed in this way, the conversation between Mary and the angel in the first chapter of Luke's gospel becomes a sign in the whole history of God's creation, redemption and sanctification. This is an extremely important point.

Our starting point is the love of God, or the God of love. Behind all creation is love. Love is the key to all the mysteries of existence. God's love moves God to create, to teach, to forgive, to save and to sanctify so that more and more people may find the source of energy of this love. God's ultimate goal is to create a universe of love, a world of love, in which a human community lives by the principle of voluntary mutual love. God is not a steamroller or a bulldozer, crushing or clearing away people's will and freedom. God's will is love's will, a will-to-fellowship. God created humanity in God's own image. The very Trinity tells us that God Himself is a community of love.

The visitation of the angel to Mary can be called a sign that as the human-divine relationship develops through the whole unfolding process of God's creation, redemption and sanctification of the world, an important minority has already appeared. God can anticipate this minority working with Him as intentional co-workers. If God's expectations do not go unfulfilled, but receive a positive response, then the conditions are present among humanity for the Incarnation; human cooperation has been secured and

there is no need to wait.

We know that the angel revealed God's plan to Mary. In order to continue His process of creation, redemption and sanctification, God Himself was preparing to become human, to come into the world. Mary was overcome with excitement. This was exactly what Mary, her family and many Israelites had waited for so long, was it not? Yet, for a young woman like her, the sacrifice asked was very great indeed.

The Incarnation is an event of cosmic significance. The question was, would humanity offer its collaboration and cooperation in so great an event, so that it could become a reality? Or would it be indifferent, even resistant and thus delay God's creation history? While Mary was pondering the problem brought her by the angel, not only were God and the angel awaiting her free choice, but the whole cosmos, all of nature and the whole world seemed to be waiting with bated breath, nervously anticipating her agreement, because the whole creation was still waiting to be released in order to enter into the glory of the freedom of God's children. Could anticipation become reality? Let us look at Mary's response.

We know what she said: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Through her response, she became the vessel of the Incarnation, its carrier, and the history of God's creation, redemption and sanctification entered a new stage.

I like Tu Fu's praise of Li Bai: "Your pen startles the winds and rain; your poems make the gods cry." Mary was a simple young woman, no poet, perhaps she couldn't even write, but her answer could startle the winds and rain and bring tears to the gods more than any line of verse.

We often speak of Christ's obedience. But behind it we see the commitment of the Holy Mother. Her offering was freely made, not coerced; it was responsible, not willful or impulsive. This is a thoroughly self-sacrificing love, a thoroughly self-sacrificing commitment. God would like to see a greater abundance of this love appearing among humanity by means of His creation.

I once quoted the stirring words of Teilhard de Chardin to an alumnus: "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." Mary's heedless-of-all-else love for and commitment to God was a new departure, emboldening Teilhard to express his vision.

The whole cosmos has every reason to cherish feelings of thanksgiving and reverence for Mary. And not only the whole cosmos, but the angel and God Himself too, are happy and moved because of her loving heart, her offering, her cooperation, her resolute will and her sacrifice.

We can understand from this why, in the hearts of many Christians for many years

now, in their theology and in their spiritual lives, Mary has held such a special place. Even the Protestant theologian Karl Barth said that he was not against having a statue of Mary in church, as long as it was not placed too highly. He thought it should be set among the congregation.

Let us think of it this way. Mary's offering was not her own isolated response as an individual; it was the long awaited fruit of God's work of creation. It represents the will-to-love for God among humankind, that most understanding, most inclined to do good, intentional and willingly cooperative, incisive minority. The familiar saying, "The traditions of our dead forefathers entangle the minds of the living like a nightmare," does not fit this minority very well.

My dear students, the church's mission on earth is to be the carrier of the Incarnation, to bring this "word in the beginning" among the people. Yes, we must eat, we must have shelter, we must do many things, but behind all this we seek to make ourselves like Mary. In order for the word to become flesh and show forth among people, we are willing to let it be done to us according to God's word, without counting any cost.

I don't want you students to think the Seminary such a wonderful place, or think that it is the destination and goal of all your seeking. No, each of us is still receiving God's creation, redemption and sanctification. We are all unfinished, we all have our weaknesses, our actions are at variance with our words, we are disappointing. This is no more than a school, a school for learning the lessons of love. We are all students here and we are all teachers. We grow together, and together know God's holiness and goodness. We are all studying how to do these things. This is a more appropriate view of the Seminary.

In the worship life of the Seminary, in its spiritual life and in theological discussion, you may meet things you are not familiar with. This situation always requires that you learn to respect others, that you learn to value others as yourselves, that you see what you can learn from others. You know the famous passage from Marx: "You praise the constant changes in nature and the infinity of all its pleasing diversity and rich resources. You do not ask of roses and violets that they send forth the same fragrance. Then why do you demand that the most precious thing-the spirit-have only one kind of existence?" In 1 Corinthians 12: 3, Paul says that no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. Clearly, all who recognize Jesus as Lord are moved by the Holy Spirit. So let us learn the lesson of respecting others to enrich our spirits, our spiritual cultivation and our theology. We, each one of us, need only make Mary's response - I am the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word - our daily prayer and offering and we will be able to become a community of love, a community in which we all practice mutual respect, mutual learning, mutual support, and mutual advancement.

Speech at the opening convocation of Nanjing Theological Seminary.  
September 9, 1984

## Resurrection - From Understanding to Faith

That one who has died should live again goes against common sense. People have difficulty believing it. Christ's resurrection is a stumbling stone embodied in the very fabric of Christianity.

But consider for a moment that today a quarter of the world's people believe that Christ rose from the dead. This fact is fact is not so easily brushed off. People are not too clear about the facts of Christ's resurrection, but millions of people believe that the truth represented by the resurrection is profound and this non-common sensical faith has endured for two thousand years. Though no one can explain it clearly, it cannot be written off.

To put it in everyday Chinese terms, the truth of the resurrection has a mass base. If we were to say that death is all in all, the end of everything-whether good, bad, goodness, evil, beauty, ugliness, truth, falsehood-all brought to an end by death, people could not accept it. It is also unacceptable to say that annihilation is the ultimate fate of humanity, because there is no righteousness in it, no reasonableness, no justice, no sense of right and wrong, and no love. That a life like that of Jesus should end in death-that is not how the universe should be. On this point, people are of one mind.

We can find ideas similar to that of resurrection outside Christianity. "Some People," a poem by Cang Kejia, begins: "Some people live, but they are dead; some people are dead, but still they live."

You know that I admire Wen Yiduo very much. On the anniversary of his assassination by the KMT, Guo Moro wrote: "Soon it will be dawn in China, and all around the country there will be countless Wen Yiduo's - of gold, of stone, of cement.

You are a good seed and with the dawn in China, with the rays of the sun, all around and on for countless years, there will be many Wen Yiduo's. From one come many, like your name, like you yourself, they represent truth. It is not your death I remember today, it is rather your life I celebrate."

The Ming poet Tang Xianzu writes in his *The Peony Pavilion* that solely on the basis of human intellect, it is difficult to imagine a return to life from death, but on the basis of human affections, that is, deep and profound feeling and intuition, life from death is a "certain" truth.

To use the language of faith, God is Master, Ruler. God is Master of the cosmos, of nature, history and the world. Not only is everything that happens in society and history the will of God, but through everything that happens-right or wrong, good or evil, beautiful or ugly, sorrowful or happy-God's love is at work, guiding all, accepting all, transforming all, making everything into an offering from Jesus to God. Gaining life through death, gaining joy through pain, gaining strength through weakness-this is an



experience not only of the Risen Christ, but more and more becomes our personal experience. As a nation, as a church, as citizens, as believers, the experiences of the past thirty years strengthen our faith in resurrection. In the midst of all black clouds, suffering, light and happiness, we hear a voice calling us to set our minds at ease and believe: "It is the Lord" (Jn. 21: 7). Behind all phenomena, behind what lies at the back of things and even beyond that, at its most fundamental, "It is the Lord," the Lord's hand, the Lord's love, the Lord's will. This is the source of our Christian comfort, peace, faith and hope.

1984.

## Love that Loves to the End

Two or three years ago I spent some time in a convalescent hospital in the suburbs of Nanjing near the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum. Many people there were aware that I believed in Christ and at mealtime religion was often the topic of discussion. There were a few boors who would make jokes about Christian belief in the resurrection and the like. I remember one, a particularly objectionable type, who said: "You say there is a God - bring him out and show him to me and I'll believe."

To non-Christians looking at us from the outside, Christianity is just a bunch of doctrines. They would find it easier to believe without these doctrines. With the doctrines, it's just not worth it to them. Yet there are some highly educated people who do believe and find nothing ridiculous about Christianity. The anti-Christians cannot understand such people; they have no way to explain it. When they mention such people in their writings, they simply pass over their religious faith without a word-Sun Yat-sen for example, or Einstein, the writer Lao She, Dr. Lin Qiaoya, Xu Guanggi or Pavlov. Writers of essays and biographies don't mention their religion. They are presented as if they were all atheists, which seems rather dishonest.

Actually, almost without exception, the reason Christians became Christian was not because a bunch of doctrines convinced them to turn to Christ. All of us were first touched by love, compelled by love. We first felt the kind of love with which Christ loves us and, touched by the highest, most beautiful, best love there is in this world, we came to the realization that we fell short, that we were sinners. And because of this we willingly gave up everything to accept Christ. We did not first work out each doctrine intellectually. First, we were touched in our deepest feelings, in the depths of our souls, attracted and melted by Christ's love. And because of this we prostrated ourselves and submitted to Christ.

Doctrines are of course important. Their specialized language safeguards a message, a gospel - the gospel of God's love for humankind. God is love, love made manifest in Christ. This is a universe of love. The basic principle and foundation of the universe is love. We are all objects of God's love. God did not hesitate to pay a heavy price for us. Christianity moves and compels people, not by its doctrines, but by the love made manifest, love held high and spread abroad, love waiting eagerly for the final coming of a world of love. This love draws countless men and women who give their all to enlarge love's realm.

Doctrine is more concerned with matters of orthodoxy. It inevitably tends toward the rejection of any thought or faith alien to itself. Over-emphasis on orthodox doctrine always leads easily to monotony, oppressiveness and a lack of vitality. But love is lively and unrestrained, rich and varied, full of creativity. Love is the richest and most colorful spirit on earth. It is infectious, inestimable, unpredictable and incalculable.

Some people insist that love cannot be devoid of self-interest, that love always has a

secret motive. When we see the love of Christ, we must proclaim that there is love without strings, altruistic love. Christ represents this kind of love. We find this kind of love in the person of many faithful Christians as well.

If those friends at the convalescent hospital could approach the four gospels with humble hearts, they would surely get a taste of this kind of genuine love.

How deep, how unchanging was the father's love in the parable of the Prodigal Son. His love tells him that the son will surely return. He eagerly anticipates it. It is this love which melts the son's heart of stone and allows the father to take him back anew as his true son. How the Shepherd loved that one sheep out of the hundred who was lost. He did not wait for the sheep to come back, but went to look for it. Finding it, he carried it home.

Jesus so loved his friends that when he saw them suffering over a death in the family, he could not help crying.

When he saw an ambitious youth, he loved him and pointed out to him what it was that he still lacked.

His love made him weep over Jerusalem.

His love for the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the sick, and those in prison was so deep that he said, whatever you do for these people, you have done for me.

The woman despised by the world because she had five husbands, the woman accused of adultery by those who called themselves righteous, the woman who wept over her sins, washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair-Jesus loved them all.

The man who saw Jesus coming and climbed a tree to see him better, who expressed his willingness to repent and return to those he had cheated nine times their due-Jesus loved him.

His closest friends fled during his passion and some denied him. He was deeply wounded, yet he still loved them.

One sentence says it all: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn. 13: 1).

There is no greater love on earth than one who would lay down his life for his friends. This is the love of Christ.

This is the Christ in whom we are bold to believe. Love is the true essence of human life. Love is the greatest truth. Love is the most fundamental attribute of God. Love is the intrinsic attribute of the universe. Natural disasters-storms, earthquakes, volcanoes - happen in our universe. We do not understand why, but even so, we do not believe that

the true essence of the universe is hatred or destruction. No, we believe that the true essence of the universe is love and wholeness, the love manifest in Christ. With this love in our universe, we are held firm, we can be at peace, we can live with strength and meaning, we can give thanks and praise.

This is a world lacking in love, a world that needs love. If people can have love, they can feel secure. So many people long for love, but cannot get it.

The transition from semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism to socialism wits a long process. Change was a way of life and there were setbacks. In the past the Chinese people lived an agricultural life in harmony with nature: "Work by day, rest at night; what has the emperor to do with me?" But such a life is no longer an option. In the course of all the changes and setbacks, social relationships were easily strained. Things happened that harmed all sides. Add to this some political movements we could have done without, and the suffering grew. So many people were driven to distraction and experienced the inconstancy of human relationships. They felt they had no love, and they longed for it. Christ's gospel of love can satisfy this longing.

Those who "take class struggle as the key link" cannot hear the gospel of love. To speak of love seems like speaking out of turn to them, harmful to the struggle, a failure to distinguish right from wrong, friend from foe. It seems like a surrender. China today is no longer in the historical stage of taking class struggle as the key link. Today everyone wants peace and stability. The gospel of love, the gospel of reconciliation is more to the point. If you look around, you will see that the numbers of those who believe in the Lord are increasing, not decreasing.

Some years ago, the well-known writer Ba Jin went to Japan. At one of the places he visited, his host was bald. Later the man told him his story. During the Cultural Revolution, he was swayed by the propaganda of China's extreme left and became an ultra-leftist, attacking and harming many people in Japan. Later he was struck with a deep sense of guilt. He felt lie had to do something to apologize, but there was no way to make compensation, so he decided to shave his head from then on.

When I read Ba Jin's essay, I was shaken. Tile "take class struggle as the key link" line, the leftist line, the line of hate, appeared in China from the late 1950s on, and there were echoes of it in the church. On some issues, this line influenced me too. I do not need to resort to the Japanese man's counsel of despair in seeking to express my repentance. On the basis of what I know today, I am doing what I can to oppose leftism. In the Seminary, in the church, in society, I use whatever strength I have to keep "leftism" from continuing to harm people. I ask God to accept this way of showing my repentance. Leftism attacks people politically, extending the scope of attack and shrinking the scope of unity. From a faith point of view, leftism tramples love underfoot; it is a negation of the gospel. We oppose leftism today and raise up love, spreading the spirit of mutual love in the world, to let love, the love of Christ, awaken the many frozen hearts.

For students at this Seminary, the situation is different. No matter what the state of

your spiritual life when you came here, your first task is to enter into and go deeper into the four gospels, to enter more deeply into the Bible and there see this Christ, know this Christ, grow familiar with this Christ, be moved by his love, sit beside him and receive his teachings, welcome him among us and become more and more like him. In this way, before we know it, we will become utensils God can use. We can go out and take Christ's love into the world so that it may enter into the depths of many more hearts. As this semester begins, let us begin our pilgrimage anew.

1988.