

# Chinese Theological Review 1989

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## Preface

1989 marked the completion of an important decade in the life and work of the Church in China, not in terms of the life of faith, for that has been guarded and sustained since Christianity first came to China, but in the renewed expressions of that faith, in the organization of Church structures, and in theological reflection, publication and education. This period is commonly termed one of "resurgence" or "reconstruction," and refers to the ten years since 1979 during which the Communist Party of China and the People's Government have re-implemented a religious policy more in line with the criteria of religious freedom. Despite the course of recent events, the government has asserted that the policy of religious freedom will not change.

Over the last decade, both clergy and laity in the Protestant Church have given unstintingly of themselves to build up the body of the church. In the articles included in this fifth volume of *The Chinese Theological Review*, we find discussions of serious issues within the Church, as well as echoes of the concerns facing society at large. Several articles, notably those by Bao Zhimin, affirm the achievements of the Church in the past decade, but do not hesitate to point out the problems and the difficulties which lay ahead. The writers of the essays presented here have a realistic appraisal of the situation of the Church today; they are thankful for all that has been achieved, but they are not complacent.

Four articles are included from *The Syllabus*, a periodical described as "a correspondence curriculum" which is sent to more than forty thousand subscribers, aimed at self-education of lay leaders, particularly in the countryside. It is also frequently used as course material in lay training courses. To readers accustomed to a more or less Christian environment, the subject matter of the *Syllabus* articles may seem elementary, but for this very reason they illuminate for us the challenges faced by the Church in rural areas, where Christianity is experiencing rapid growth, but where trained clergy are in extremely short supply and where rural congregations' understanding of Christian faith is quite limited. These articles delineate for their readers that which is properly Christian and that which is not. "Is it Wrong to Get Rich?" shows how Christians seek to apply their faith in a very practical way. The ways in which the various topics are dealt with also give some indication of the differences between urban and rural Christian realities in China.

1989 was also the tenth anniversary of the death of Y.T. Wu, an important theologian of the 1950s who was the leading spirit and founder of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Two articles included here look at aspects of his career and his legacy to the Church. That by K.H. Ting is especially insightful, for it indicates the relevance which Y.T. Wu's thinking has for the Church in China today.

The 1988 *Review* carried the minutes of a joint meeting of the Standing Committees of the Three-Self Movement and the China Christian Council which dealt with the nature and role of the Three-Self organization and the need to re-order relationships between the two bodies and with the Church. "Re-ordering the Relationships" deals more fully with the original thinking behind the role of Three-Self organizations and what a re-ordering of relationships might

mean. This article rejects the view that such a re-ordering would mean the dissolution of Three-Self as a body related to the Church.

A growing phenomenon in China is the interest in and sympathy for religion, particularly Christianity, among non-church intellectuals. *China News Update*, a publication of the Presbyterian Church (USA), (Dec. 1989) listed eleven books published in the last few years which were either scholarly studies or translations of Western works on religious topics. In fact the number of such books has grown steadily. An article on Karl Barth by one such scholar, Liu Xiaofeng, is included here. Liu's assessment of pre-sixties Europe may be quite different from that of his Western counterparts and some may take issue with his interpretation of Barth's ideas or of German theological tradition. Yet Barth's dictum, "The world is the world, but God is God," provides Liu with a new way of seeing his own situation and introduces the concept of transcendence as a historical and social challenge for China. There is a different emphasis in the article by Luo Zhufeng. His report at the annual meeting of the Shanghai Society for Religious Studies looks at religious issues from the point of view of how religious believers can contribute to modernization and socialist construction in China.

The challenge of Christianity to traditional moral and social structures as well as to modern Chinese society is explored in "A Christian Perspective on the Traditional Chinese Concept of Man," and "The Summons of Personality and Spirit." These articles surely represent the fruits of the struggles the Church has undergone, both within itself and with the world, as they seek to engage the issues which face Christians and non-Christians alike. Both articles present a vision of what Christianity can bring to its encounter with Chinese culture and society.

This vision becomes even more compelling in sermon form. "The Lord of Sorrows," by Rev. Wang Weifan, is grounded in a uniquely Chinese sensibility and addresses the Chinese situation at a deeper theological level. There is a power to its image of "innocents" in the Church which makes its message meaningful both for the broader Chinese society and for Christians elsewhere.

Materials for this volume of *The Chinese Theological Review* have been selected by the editor from the *Nanjing Theological Review* and *The Syllabus*, both published by Nanjing Theological Seminary; from *Tian Feng*, published monthly by the China Christian Council, Shanghai; and from the *Yanjing Seminary Journal*.

Pinyin romanization of Chinese names and terms is used throughout, except where another form is widely used or, in the case of names, is known to be a personal preference. Biblical quotations follow the Revised Standard Version. A brief identification of authors is given at the back of the book.

I would like to thank the authors of the articles and sermons included in this volume for generously consenting to share their work and for their continued support for *The Chinese Theological Review*.

As always, this volume has benefited from the encouragement and assistance of Marvin Hoff and Joanne Hoff of the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia. For their

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*Janice Wickeri*

## **1. Facing Reality and Responding to Challenges: On Ten Years of Chinese Church Reconstruction – Bao Zhimin**

The Chinese Church has traversed exactly ten years since the State implemented the religious policy anew in 1979. These last ten years have differed from the Cultural Revolution, a decade of privation and suffering. The Church has been full of faith in these last ten years, going about the task of reconstruction vigorously. It has been plain for all to see how joyful and busy she has been. Great things have been achieved in ten years; a page to be cherished has been written in the history of the Chinese Church.

The fate of the Church has always been very closely linked to the fate of Chinese society; she is destined to go through the same trials and tribulations, the same joys as her people. 1979 was the year in which the Chinese Church could start reconstruction, and it was also the year in which Chinese society decisively turned its attention towards reconstruction, and began the process of reform and opening up. In the past ten years, the Chinese people have been trying to find and pursue the path to prosperity, although that path has been rough and bumpy, beset with hazards and confusion. But the people have shown themselves adept at summing up and considering their experience, daring to face up to problems and go forward.

Ten years ago people thronged to reopened churches, tears of gratitude in their eyes. A fervor which rivaled that of Zerubbabel and his compatriots as they rebuilt the holy temple infused the hearts of Chinese Christians. In the autumn of 1980 the China Christian Council was formed and took up the task of preparing the ground for the Chinese Church's formidable mission of establishing itself during the new period; this marked the Church's passage from "destruction to construction." At the same time, Three-Self could never again be called an empty slogan, for it became a guiding principle in the construction of the Chinese Church. The desire of the broad masses of Chinese Christians for a well-functioning Church was initially realized: the opening of churches and meeting-points in the last ten years; the renewal of church administrative work; the printing of Bibles and other church publications in large quantities; the widespread development of theological education; and extensive exchanges with the international body of Christ ... all delineate for us scene after joyful scene, revealing the steady and marvelous guidance of God. All this is a reality no one can deny.

But we have no reason to rest on our laurels. Throughout the ages, the Christian Church has never rested self-satisfied, for this is the only way it can open itself up, stride forward and perfect itself. History teaches us that whenever the Church has been self-satisfied, whenever it has felt that all is well, that is the very point when the Church starts to retrogress. Neither did the Lord ever permit the historical Church to go unscathed. Only by a continuous process of cleansing and illumination can the Church move toward holiness and purity in accordance with the Lord's purpose. Whatever the times, therefore, the Church should continually face up to the contamination, filth and dust which infect it, and allow itself to be washed in the blood of Christ. A self-satisfied Church, a Church which cannot see its own impurities, cannot conceivably be in God's hands ready to be used by God, nor can its light shine forth in its own times.

In fact the many problems which have appeared within the Church are not so small that we need a magnifying glass to find them. Many phenomena unbecoming the nature of a Church affect the quality of the her witness. The question of the use of authority in church management has arisen in every region. The leadership style of a minority of responsible persons has not been one of trying with all one's heart and might to serve the Lord's Church, of tending and guiding the flock, of gaining the respect of the people in serving the masses. Rather it has been characterized by being far removed from the masses and reality, catering to selfish desires by exploiting power and position to the point where this has had a very bad effect on believers. Owing to the rather abnormal relationship between government and Church in some places, some government cadres who have no real understanding of religion interfere with the Church. The reasons for this, apart from these cadres' lack of understanding of the religious policy, and the tangible and intangible effects of leftist thinking, also lie in the fact that a small proportion of responsible persons within the Church ask for instructions on and report on matters large and small, willingly taking a subordinate role. It may be, therefore, that they will be accorded a "courteous reception," but they have lost trust among believers. They use their powerful connections and order people about within the Church, preventing that body from realizing its true nature.

Some of these responsible persons in the Church are those who have been attacked in various political campaigns. Because they have already been put through the mill, they treat all matters very cautiously. The dread of "another political campaign every seven or eight years" is still deeply etched in the hearts of a number of intellectuals in society, and of course it cannot be dispelled from the hearts of evangelists in the Church.

The Three-Self Movement brought to an end a period of denominational conflict within the Church and a great many people continue to be thankful for the cooperation and unity which were ushered in. Today, however, all sorts of other deadly wasting of time, internal wrangling and disharmony are once more damaging the Church's witness. In a minority of places, some self-seeking, black-hearted people, motivated by a desire for personal gain, have gone so far as to report fellow-workers to the relevant government departments, causing even government cadres to throw up their hands in bafflement. Factionalism, open strife and veiled struggle have caused many believers who love the Lord to feel bitterly disappointed; some are so full of regret and hopelessness they feel they have to leave the Church.

China was a feudal society for a very long time; people have found that in the modernization process the shadow of feudalistic thinking still lurks, a heavy burden on China's road to modernization. When it comes to the Church, the influence of feudalism is possibly stronger and yet more entrenched than in other areas, and is an obstacle on the road ahead. At the very least, it makes itself felt in the following two ways: Firstly in the countryside, the believers are made up of the so called "four manys;" that is to say there are many old people, many women, many sick people, and many illiterates, among whom backward feudalistic thinking, even ignorance, still have a firm hold, so that they are easily attracted by heretical beliefs which they follow blindly, unable to make distinctions. The Chinese Church needs to expend a lot of energy on raising the quality of believers at the grass roots. Secondly, it is evident that a patriarchal style of work has greatly influenced some Church leaders who like to be called "elder," who like to be shown respect, which leads them to extremely conceited

behavior, and in some places to acting the petty tyrant. The patriarchal system makes for less democracy within the Church and means that dissenting opinions do not get a hearing. The Church thus becomes an enterprise run by individuals. Ministry becomes a cover for older people to become entrenched in their positions. There are many of real ability whom the believers love; but those workers who can really expound the Gospel are not put in good positions because of "differences of opinion." Replicas of Eli's bad example have appeared: their eyes have grown so weak that they can hardly see. Despite being old and weak, they will not happily relinquish power, they are jealous of others' abilities, reject dissenting views, and have become virtual obstacles to the Church's construction.

The cry "the harvest is great, the workers few" is to be heard today all over the Chinese Church. Graduates of systematic theological training have dispersed to every corner of the country with hearts dedicated to the task; a good number of them have already become the backbone of the Church in particular areas. The rising generation of young evangelists have injected new life into the Chinese Church, and they should be allowed to put their abilities to work in the tasks for which they have been prepared. However, it does not always work out that way in practice. The experience of a minority of theological students is upsetting and fills one with sympathy for their situation. They report how, after returning to their home churches, although they take a cautious approach, they are blamed for whatever they do. There is no way for them to win over the responsible person in that area and they find themselves in an awkward situation. Despite their determination to work well, the way they are censured leaves them in a difficult predicament, at their wits' end. Their meager earnings mean they find it difficult to sustain even the basic essentials of life, let alone getting married, or supporting their parents. A minority of students return to a cold reception at their home church, no thought being given to their means of livelihood, and no concrete work given them. Although there is much to be done in the Church, they face so many limitations that their hands are effectively tied. For many different reasons, some theological graduates leave the Church, or become lay workers. But that which has been started in the Church by the older generation needs after all to be continued by younger people. A lot of genuinely thorny problems confront the Chinese Church.

There is of course a great number of people within the Chinese Church who devote themselves with absolute sincerity to its ministry, who are indeed the hope of the Chinese Church. They are working away quietly, not attracting public attention, shouldering the burden of the Church's construction. Some of them are over seventy yet still they diligently turn their hand to the plough; some of them are in their prime yet do not count their losses, but put up with all sorts of hardships so as to make their contribution. More numerous still are the lay workers. Their lively presence is felt in every corner of the motherland. They make no demands, are simple and faithful. These people are the pride of the Chinese Church. The ministry of the Church will continue because of them. They are respected by both God and people. But the corruption of a minority of Church leaders in some places is not only severely eroding the body of the Church, but is also viciously stifling the aforementioned sources of effective strength within the Church. This illustrates how, in terms of organizational structure and management function, the Church has already reached a point where it must undertake reforms and make adjustments. An astonishing time-gap has emerged in the reforms within the Church and within society. If we remain unconcerned, and dare not face up to realities, if we do not humbly accept

the light of God, the Church will be hard pushed to shoulder the sacred and formidable task of witnessing to Christ in our times.

In the past few years, home gatherings which have little contact with the Three-Self organization increasingly flourish in every region. We should not regard them as threats, because so long as they are not contravening the constitution or the law, they should also be protected. The Church should continually examine itself on how, in spiritual terms, it can best offer pastoral care to its flock and meet their needs.

God opened the gate of good news for the Chinese Church. Since 1979, there has already been a very big increase in the number of believers in the cities and the countryside. Ministry has and must continue to be greatly developed in order to respond to this need. The Chinese Church has shouldered the great responsibility of nourishing the flock and spreading the Gospel to the people. The Lord did indeed instruct, "Give them something to eat," but this food has to be the food of life as received from the Lord, and nothing other. Facing reality, the Chinese Church has to rouse its spiritual energies as never before.

Let us once again turn our minds to the period under discussion. In the past ten years, a billion Chinese have experienced a visible improvement in their material standard of living. People have broken free of their mental and spiritual shackles. The ideological realm has become daily more animated. People are freeing themselves from the restraints of bookishness and dogmatism, and are using the scientific approach of seeking truth from facts to investigate problems. Taking religious theoretical research as an example, already many scholars no longer see religion as a hindrance to social development, and even accept it as one of the positive forces in society. In assessing the current development of society and in making a comparison with Western material civilization, some scholars believe that the material development of Chinese society also needs a type of Christian spirit. They acknowledge that the importance accorded to a pragmatic attitude and the ethics of secular culture in Chinese tradition need an infusion of Christian transcendence and its ability to look beyond itself, so as to further meet the needs of China's modernization.

History has presented us with a golden opportunity, the chance of a lifetime. How are we going to seize this opportunity and respond to these challenges? The Chinese Church faces a crucial choice: will it be used by God, or will it be spat out and rejected? Will it spread the Gospel and witness to the Lord our Savior in this period, or will it be cast aside to await judgment? Moreover, the crux lies in whether or not we are capable of self-reform. We should not give up going to see the doctor for fear of the diagnosis, nor should we be apathetic. Ten years have yielded many achievements, but ten years have also shown us many problems begging resolution in the fields of organizational structure and at every level of leadership. We firmly believe that the Lord who is constantly guiding and looking after us, will guide us to the end, because God so loved the Church that He sacrificed Himself for it, and will therefore go on using water and the word to cleanse the Church, so that it becomes faultless and pure.

*From The Nanjing Theological Review, No. 10 (June 1989), p. 5.  
Translated by Francesca Rhys.*



## 2. On Religious Freedom – Yang Zhouhuai

Article Thirty-six of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China passed by the Fifth Plenary Meeting of the Fifth National People's Congress in late 1982 stipulates that:

"Citizens of the People's Republic of China have the freedom of religious belief.

"No national organization, social body, or individual can compel any citizen to believe or not believe in religion; nor can they discriminate between believers and non-believers.

"The Chinese nation protects all normal religious activities. Religion cannot be used to disrupt social order, endanger the health of citizens or to hinder the activities of the national education system.

"It is not permissible for foreign concerns to control religious organizations or religious affairs in China."

What follows is a discussion of religious freedom from the perspective of a Christian believer.

(1) Religious freedom is a basic right and duty of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution.

We need not investigate when religious freedom was first considered a civil right; however we do not believe that it is a "gift" bestowed by certain organizations, governments or individuals, as some would have it. Rather, it emerged in the process of social development as an objective truth to be adhered to; moreover, it is a truth which any progressing society must adhere to and implement. Religious freedom or its absence is a sign of how far a given society has progressed. Those political parties and governments which implement religious freedom do so out of respect for this truth and from the realization that such a policy is necessary to social stability, development and progress. For this reason, credit for religious freedom cannot be attributed to the "generosity," "wisdom," or "care" of any government, party, group or individual. Religious freedom is not something a society can either have or not have. Thus, its implementation is not a matter of choice or preference. Instead, the decision to implement a policy of religious freedom is determined by whether a developing society has recognized this policy as an objective law in the process of social development and as a truth which should be adhered to.

For this reason:

(a) No individual, group, political party, or government should suggest that religious freedom is a "gift" or "special consideration" they have granted to believers.

(b) Whether the implementation of religious freedom is correct or incorrect, good or bad, is determined by whether it is perceived as necessary and inevitable. A policy of religious freedom cannot be based on subjective feelings concerning the acceptability of religion. Nor should the policy be better implemented for some religion perceived as more acceptable and poorly implemented or not at all for a religion perceived as less acceptable.

(c) If religious believers among the citizenry are satisfied with the degree of religious freedom they enjoy, it is because the government acknowledges the necessity and

inevitability of religious freedom. However, if the government is unclear about the policy and its implementation, then these citizens will become dissatisfied with it.

(d) It is wrong to credit the presence or absence of religious freedom to an individual, group or political party. Religious freedom should be granted, to do so is normal, not to do so is abnormal and mistaken.

(e) Both believers and non-believers should, because of their shared responsibility for social development, assist the organ in which political power is vested in carrying out a sound policy of religious freedom. Thus, religious believers should not seek such a policy only because it benefits themselves.

(f) The purpose of enacting a policy of religious freedom is not to secure the patriotism of believers, nor is it a prerequisite for such patriotism. The manner in which such a policy is implemented naturally influences the feelings of religious believers, but their loyalty to the nation is neither a precondition for nor a product of whether they enjoy religious freedom. This is because the responsibility a Christian feels for his or her people, fellow citizens, nation and society is based on faith and obedience to the command to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." This "love of others" is the foundation of a Christian's responsibility for nation, people, neighbor and society. It is not something given in exchange for a policy of religious freedom. For this reason, there is no cause and effect relationship between a policy of religious freedom and patriotic behavior. Religious believers comprise one group of citizens, and as citizens, they are bound to be patriotic.

(g) The question of religious freedom is not one of whether or not such a policy should be implemented, but rather whether the manner of implementation is good or bad.

(h) From the standpoint of those organs which administer the policy of religious freedom, no distinction can be made between the freedom to become a believer and the freedom to become a non-believer. We cannot conclude that one is better or worse than the other. All we can truthfully say is that both are permissible.

(2) Freedom of religious belief includes research, discussion and criticism of religion.

Those in religious circles should express their own opinions about research on religion. For example, if someone suggests that Christianity is "this or that," then Christians should be able to agree or disagree. They cannot be expected to accept the opinions of non-believers concerning religion, nor should believers expect non-believers to agree with them. Christians should be willing to employ argumentation and apologetics, and to use philosophy, logic and theoretical studies to defend their doctrines, rites and activities. The purpose of such research and discussion is neither to expand religious belief (though believers may begin from this point), nor to undermine religion (though non-believers may maintain such an attitude).

Religious freedom sanctions research into all areas of religious phenomena. Religious believers should also be able to investigate other religions for comparative purposes. These

studies, however, should not be based on the desire to repudiate other religions, just as evangelization and other religious activities should not seek to undermine other religions.

If the purpose of research into religion is not to oppose religion, then religious believers should not be excluded from participating. The best means of avoiding a unilateral interpretation of religion is to listen to opinions from all sides.

Religious freedom does not only mean freedom to believe in the existence of God, but, more importantly, the freedom to act on the basis of one's faith. For Christians, this means freedom to put the command to love our neighbors as ourselves into practice. Religious freedom thus includes an ethical dimension, the significance of which is that "believers are called upon to voluntarily conduct their speech, behavior and thought according to a set of ethical regulations which Christians believe come from God."

In the past, some have claimed that, just as political parties will naturally disappear in the future, so religion will naturally disappear. However, a policy of religious freedom means that believers should not be required to accept the proposition that religion will inevitably disappear and that consideration of this question should not be forced upon religious circles. When the disappearance of political parties has been broached in the past, it was usually understood that one must strive to strengthen the establishment of such parties in the present. In the same way, the discussion of the future disappearance of religion should not mean limitations on its influence or growth in the present.

(3) A policy of religious freedom is not a tool intended to aid the growth of religion, nor is it a tool intended to aid its suppression.

Both before and during the Cultural Revolution, the policy of religious freedom was not strictly enforced. Afterwards, when the policy was implemented, many people turned to religion, but we cannot conclude that the policy was responsible for this development. Instead, this growth was a result of the mistaken policy of suppressing religion during the Cultural Revolution. It cannot be inferred from this that a policy of religious freedom is a spur to the growth of religions.

According to the reports of religious groups, their membership grew rapidly during those years. This rapid growth also caused a number of problems which should concern us, for they increase our responsibilities; problems such as: the level of religious knowledge on the part of converts, the organization of the religious groups, the location of religious activities, the capacity of religious workers and so on. These issues are even more important than the happiness such growth brings us.

(4) The article on religious freedom in the Constitution.

The understanding of religion has changed significantly since the promulgation of the 1982 Constitution. The government hopes that religious circles can contribute to the establishment of both the material and spiritual aspects of socialism in many areas. As Comrade Xi Zhongxun said in a speech he made to the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference in

1986: "In this new historical era, our nation's Christians can contribute to the establishment of the spiritual and material aspects of socialist civilization, just as other citizens can, and the government hopes that Christianity will be do its part toward this end." This evaluation of religion is more positive than that contained in Article Thirty-six of the Constitution, in that the language is less restrictive and more encouraging, and because it is an affirmation of the contribution religious circles can make to socialism. This is due to the fact that present views on the nature of religion, and even those presented at the Fourth National Chinese Christian Conference in 1986, differ from those held in 1982 when the Constitution was promulgated. It is my hope that these differences will be attended to when the time comes for the Constitution to be amended.

*From The Yanjing Theological Journal, Nos.2 & 3 (1989.1), p. 122.  
Translated by Craig Moran.*

### **3. Re-ordering the Relationships – K.H. Ting**

During this meeting in Shanghai we need to discuss an issue which has been a deep concern and a frequently discussed topic among a vast number of colleagues and fellow Christians: how to re-order the internal relationships of the Church, and first of all, the relationship between the Three-Self organization and the Church.

Please allow me to present the background of this issue according to my personal understanding.

The contribution and achievements of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement initiated by Mr. Y. T. Wu have been immense. It has brought about significant changes in Chinese Christianity and to a certain extent in world Christianity:

(1) In new China it has raised the banner of patriotism, uniting a vast number of Christians to love their country and to participate in the building of socialism.

(2) Through the practice of three-self and patriotism, Christianity has changed its image among the people. It has lessened the difficulties in the implementation of the religious freedom principle. It has provided a better environment for Christian activities. It enabled the Church to hold its own through the devastation of the Cultural Revolution.

(3) The behests of the former generation of Church leaders to be independent, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating have been actualized throughout China. They paved the way for our present goal: to govern well, to support well and to propagate well.

(4) It promoted unity and harmony among various traditions, and provided favorable conditions for a post-denominational Church.

(5) It has presented one model for selfhood and independence among Third World Churches.

(6) Our exposure of the damage done to the missionary movement by colonialism and imperialism has alerted the attention of historians, Church leaders and Christians in general world-wide. To a degree this has encouraged a rethinking of mission in its theory and practice.

(7) In the Church world-wide we have won the friendship of many leaders and fellow Christians. At the same time they have been helped to see the hope in the Church and this has strengthened their faith.

Like any other human movement and organization, the Three-Self Movement led by the Three-Self organization is not without shortcomings and mistakes. But its accomplishments are great and clearly recognized by all. We cannot deny that the Three-Self Movement has been a tool in the hand of God.

As we know, the goals of the Three-Self Movement are only to promote patriotism and to promote self-government, self-support and self-propagation within the Church. With these as its only goals, its aims are quite limited. Three-Self has always been considered an organization with strong political overtones. It is not within the boundaries of its goals and responsibilities to manage or direct the Church. In all versions of the constitution of the Three-Self organization it was never stated that its task is to run the Church.

From the beginning of this movement this has been an important emphasis, and made clear to Christians that the Three-Self Movement was not to lead or supervise the Church. It is only to call Chinese Christians to love their country, and at the same time to insist that the Church in China should not be dominated by Churches of other countries.

The reason a vast number of Christians supported Three-Self in the early days (within three years, more than half of the Christians in China signed their names to the Manifesto), was that they realized that only when the Church practiced three-self could there be a future for the Church. They wanted to manage the Church well, to witness well. In the Three-Self Patriotic Movement they found the hope and channel for doing so. Three-Self does not interfere with faith, and does not run the Church. It only promotes selfhood and independence, to open up a future for the Church. Therefore Christians could rest assured.

Yet as time went on there have been changes in the functions of the Three-Self organization. These are understandable changes. The Korean War led to the freezing of Church funds between China and abroad. Financial assistance from mission boards stopped. Many denominations found their leadership and management paralyzed. Three-Self organizations found it necessary to begin shouldering the responsibilities of various functions of Church leadership and management. Then, with repeated political campaigns, the centralization of leadership in our government had become increasingly heightened. This mood affected the Church also. In many places the actual power of leadership for Church work unavoidably became centered in Three-Self organizations. In many places the Three-Self moved from a Christian movement and mass organization which was originally meant to lift high the banner of patriotism, to promote self-government, self-support and self-propagation, to a position side by side with, or even above the Church. It became a management department, like a Church and yet not really a Church; like a government yet not really a government. Many colleagues and fellow Christians do not understand and cannot explain these tendencies. In carrying out the work there have been conflicts and contradictions. These have made our unity difficult. In other words, the relationship between Three-Self as an organization and the Church is not in order. This has posed the issue of re-ordering the relationship.

Our work in the Church needs to have an adequate basis in faith and theology. The Church is a social organization. But from the perspective of a Christian's faith, thinking and frame of mind, the Church is different from social organizations such as the Women's Federation and the Red Cross. It is not like any other organization. It has its sacred dimension. The Church is not only a spiritual fellowship of believers, it is the household of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is the body of Christ with Christ as its head. As our hymn says, the Church is "made by holy water and holy word, a new creation of the

Lord." Also, "the Church is the golden lantern." In the Apostle's Creed and in the Nicene Creed, after expressing our faith in God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, the fourth stanza goes on to say that we believe in the Church. We can see that Christians throughout the ages have accepted the Church as part of the Christian mystery, and part of the Christian faith.

Precisely because of the place of the Church in Christian doctrine, Christians find it uncomfortable and out of order to have any other organization set above the Church. They would feel uneasy if the position of Christ as head of the Church were taken away. Therefore, the idea that "Three-Self leads the Church," or "the Church is to be a religious organization administratively run by the Religious Affairs Bureau" grates on the ears of Christians. This is not to say that Christians do not love their country, or do not support their government, nor is it caused by the anti-new China feelings of Christians abroad. It is a matter of faith. For those who are not Christians and who do not understand Christianity or comprehend the thinking and feelings of Christians, this phenomenon is difficult to grasp.

In the fifth chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians Paul spoke of Christ's love for the Church, of his giving himself, cleansing the Church with water and word, so that the Church can be sanctified, and presented before him in splendor, without spot or wrinkle, holy without blemish. In the early days of Three-Self we frequently used this passage of scripture to speak about the sanctification of the Church. It is worth mentioning now that, after the washing it should be the purified Church, and not the water that remains. Martin Luther initiated the Reformation. After many decades the movement had successfully completed its task. The result was a reformed Church, not the maintenance of the movement itself. The Church will remain always, while movements and their organizations are to serve the Church. The essence of Christianity is the Church and not any movement. From time to time it is necessary to adjust the functions of a movement.

With these considerations, many colleagues and fellow Christians feel that, since the Three-Self Movement has accomplished its basic task and reached its important goals, a time of adjustment has arrived. The nurture and preservation of the Church (Ephesians 5) must be carried out by the Church in the Church's own way. No other organization can take its place.

Colleagues and fellow Christians, I often think of John the Baptist who was so important, yet so humble. At the time of his birth his father Zechariah prophesied: "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way." This shows us the position of John the Baptist in God's history of salvation. When John met Jesus face to face thirty years later he proclaimed: "I am not the Christ, but the one sent before him." He even said, "He must increase and I must decrease." It seems that John was saying that when a movement to prepare the way loses sight of the fact that its task is a preparatory one, that it is not to supplant Christ, then it will inevitably retrogress, and rather than a stimulant, it will become an obstruction.

Some of our colleagues may question whether our self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating continue to face problems. There are centrifugal forces. With the opening of China there is infiltration from abroad. In addition there are people engaged in illegal activities. Therefore is this an appropriate time to speak of re-ordering the relationships? Here we need to make clear that the goals of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement are limited to promoting love of our country and the three-self principle. If it goes beyond these, it will take over the rightful functions of the Church and lead to many problems. We need to manage the Church well, to govern it well, support it well, propagate well, and bring unity among colleagues who come from various traditions and backgrounds. We need to nurture and teach Christians so that they can resist infiltration from abroad, and discern misinterpretation of the Bible and truth and recognize all false teachings, to witness for Christ and to propagate the Gospel. All these are endless. They can be carried out within the Church rightfully and effectively under the auspices of the Church and the Christian councils. It is for the sake of carrying out these tasks that we need to deal with the relationship question. Reality has shown that while the relationship has not been re-ordered, our work has been jeopardized. "Expanding our unity" has often been an empty phrase. Reactionary infiltration from overseas and illegal activities are banned by law. This is a function for the appropriate government departments, and not a task for Three-Self organizations.

Some colleagues may ask: If the functions of Three-Self are so limited, why did we wait until now to raise the question, rather than raise it earlier? I think one of the reasons is the "leftist" line which began to rise in our country in the 1950s and eventually occupied a position of dominance. The work of the Church was severely disturbed and damaged. Under the circumstances we could not put this issue on our agenda. The second reason is that since the end of the Cultural Revolution our churches have been busily negotiating for the return of properties, reopening and building churches, setting up home meeting points, publishing the Bible and Christian literature, and establishing theological schools. Therefore this issue has not been a priority. The third reason is that we need substantial experience before we can locate where the problem is and have the wherewithal to solve it. The establishment of the China Christian Council in 1980 to work on governing well, supporting well and propagating well can be considered an important step towards this re-ordering of relationships.

Are we to eliminate Three-Self? Absolutely not. Three-Self is our principle and guiding direction. No matter what change takes place in the function of Three-Self organizations, these will not mean that we give up three-self as a principle and guideline. We should realize that to lift up and promote three-self is the ongoing work of the Church in China and all its members. It is far more effective to demonstrate the validity of self-government, self-support and self-propagation when the Church and the China Christian Council can govern well, support well and propagate well.

No matter how we re-order our relationships, our principle of mutual respect of various faith traditions, liturgies and their unique characteristics will not only remain unchanged, but also will be implemented better so that no single tradition will feel slighted. We specially urge those who are in the majority to be more loving and understanding to those who are in the minority. As we set rules and regulations we must consider the uniquenesses of the minorities. We also hope that those in the minority would consider the good of the whole, and not



exaggerate the differences in faith and liturgy and ignore the oneness given by Christ in our basic faith or take action that is harmful to our unity.

The leadership provided by administrative groups to their subordinates and to the grassroots congregations should be churchly and pastoral, and not administrative control with abuse of power. It should provide direction and assistance with theological bases and principles.

The hope placed on us by the vast number of Christians is to conscientiously attend to the work of the Church well. Only when the Church is well managed can it become the center of unity for all those who claim Jesus Christ as Lord in our land. Therefore the placement of personnel within the Christian community must reflect the demand for a well managed Church. Instead of sticking to one pattern, we should be open to all avenues to place in important positions all who are willing to serve Christ and the Church. We must learn from all colleagues and fellow Christians who can make a contribution in handling well the work of the Church, especially those who have gained the trust and respect of Christians in the nurture of the spiritual life and those who can safeguard the rights of the Church. Whether they are old or young, we should not detest or exclude them. If there has been estrangement in the past, let us forgive one another in the Lord and seek reconciliation. By so doing there will be a new great unity for Chinese Christianity. We urge all pastors, evangelists and workers to rekindle the fire we had when we were first called to serve, to rededicate ourselves, to free ourselves from secondary matters, to concentrate and hold fast, so that we can become shepherds of great spiritual resources, the treasure and riches of the Church in China.

At the same time we also realize that to manage the Church well is a gigantic task. We need talents of all kinds. No matter how we re-structure or re-order, we cannot afford to lose any colleague who wishes to continue to labor for the Church. We need to arrange staffing carefully so that each can develop his or her potential and be properly placed to work together with the same mind for the work of the Church. We should also take care of their material benefits.

In all we do we should consider how we can benefit the upbuilding of the Church of Christ and unite Christians under the banner of "love-country, love-Church." Therefore all that is improper for the Church and displeasing in the sight of Christians should be firmly rejected, no matter who has initiated it. At least we should not hasten to do it without consulting with the national Church council and the national Three-Self organization. Some of our friends do not believe in religion. They do not know what religion is all about and have no love for the Church or understanding for the thoughts and feelings of Christians. They may make suggestions out of good intentions, but these will not be acceptable to Christians. We should explain patiently and clearly why these suggestions cannot be accepted.

For a long period the government Religious Affairs Bureaus have been giving us tremendous help. But many colleagues have wondered, as we find it necessary today to re-order the relationships within our Church, how far we can go toward solving the problem if we do not also re-order the relationship with the government? Yes, this is an important issue. Yet we should know that the leadership in the Party and the government is already aware of the situation. The essence of the Thirteenth Party Congress includes a readjustment of the

functions of government Religious Affairs Bureaus. It is considering seriously the rectification of its relationship with various religious groups. I believe that we can anticipate the principle of church-state separation being put into greater effect. The government and the religions should co-exist on a long term basis in a relationship of mutual monitoring and of equality. The relationship of the government and the China Christian Council and the Three-Self should not be along the lines of "strengthening government control." Resolute non-interference should be the stance toward the numerous normal religious organizations and activities. For the small number of counter-revolutionary, illegal activities coordinated with infiltration from abroad there should be tightened control, not non-interference.

The government has made great efforts in the implementation of the policy of religious freedom. It has given help politically, provided services and given suggestions to the religious sector according to the policy and guiding principles of the Party and government laws and regulations. These we have appreciated. But when it comes to the work of the Church in the areas of personnel, property, finance, organization, administration and Church affairs, the government should give respect, instead of interference, so that the Church can be managed well in its own way. We have reason to believe that this spirit will be reaffirmed and implemented on all levels including the grassroots. We religious people, as admonishing friends of the Party, also have the responsibility to hasten this spirit in becoming a fuller reality. To readjust the relationships both within the Church and between Church and state is vital to our doing the work well and to the greater unity of Christians. If not, our country will suffer and so will the Church.

Some people think that our ferment and searching would cause attacks from anti-China forces in Hong Kong and abroad, on the grounds that we are admitting that Three-Self was a mistake and that it is time to quit and so on. No matter what we do, whether we make adjustments or not, there will not be any good word from them. But when we build God's Church so that Christians are more satisfied, drawn closer together and achieve greater unity, then God will be more glorified. Some people overseas are so eager to be anti-Communist that they even create false documents and fabricate the seal of the Communist Party. How can we expect from them any proper response to our thinking, our hopes and aspiration to love our Church and manage it well?

Of course it seems abrupt to bring out the issue of re-ordering our relationships at this time. Yet colleagues and fellow Christians everywhere have been aware of the existence of this problem and have long been discussing it. Recently we had set up discussions on this with some colleagues. I was happy to see how enthusiastic these discussions have been. Everyone is concerned about the larger picture without any selfish departmental ism. We should be grateful.

Should there be any change? What is to be changed? How can change come about? We don't need to draw any hasty conclusions. I hope all our colleagues and fellow Christians will participate in the discussion, express your ideas, say all that is in your mind with no reservation, with only one goal: to build the Church in our country so that it really becomes a Church of beauty for Christ.

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*Translated by Jean Woo.*  
*Reprinted by permission from China Notes, Winter 1988-89.*

#### **4. How to View Religious Activities – Bao Zhimin**

Where there is religious belief, there must be religious activity, for religious activity is the outward evidence of religious belief. The Chinese Constitution safeguards regular religious activity. And so, the condition of regular religious activities reflects the degree to which the policy on religion is being carried out. The relevant documents issued by the Central Committee emphasize on the one hand the maintenance of the guarantees safeguarding regular religious activities, and on the other hand the need to attack those activities which, under the cloak of religion, involves that which contravenes the law, or which are counter-revolutionary. We recognize the former as the external manifestation of religious belief, but the latter as behavior which violates the criminal law. This kind of behavior may well disguise itself under the cloak of religion, as it may under the cloak of art, literature, commerce, or foreign trade. Consequently we must draw a clear distinction between regular religious activities and those which contravene the law, for only on the basis of such a distinction, based on legal considerations, can the Party's religious policy be effectively carried out.

It cannot be denied that a minority of cadres attached to local religious affairs bureaus and some people with only a theoretical interest in religion, still fail to make a distinction between the two, with the consequence that they cannot help but make mistakes in carrying out their responsibilities. On the one hand, they turn a blind eye to feudal superstitions and irregular activities, especially those conducted under the guise of religion, not daring to control and punish them promptly. On the other hand, when regular religious activities are being carried out, they are often anxious and confused, especially as there is a lack of understanding of religion and the religious policy on the part of a certain number of local cadres. This means that they look upon regular religious activities as superstitious or illegal, and so they forbid them. All this has had its effect upon the implementation of the religious policy.

The study of religion should, in theory, help in the implementation of the religious policy, and should result in mobilizing the mass of religious believers behind socialist reconstruction. But there is still a small number of students of religion who have even now failed to throw off a "leftist" frame of mind. With a stale outlook which disregards the facts, their failure to see that all the religions in China have undergone a change has provided a theoretical basis for erroneous methods restricting regular religious activities.

Lei Zhenchang has published an article in the Guangming Daily of 9 May 1998 entitled "The Religious Question in the Primary Stage of Socialism," in which he reveals his outlook on religion in our country. He takes as his starting-point the primary stage of socialism theory. There are some commendable points in his article, but in the section entitled, "The Correct Formulation and Implementation of Religious Policy," he deals with religious activities by classifying them according to three distinct categories: regular, irregular, and illegal. When he speaks of irregular religious activities, his meaning clearly differs from government documents which distinguish between regular religious activities and illegal activities which take place under the guise of religion. Lei says, "Among religious activities there are some which, arising from irregular objectives, are too frequent, too long, or too big, which have an unfavorable effect on production, on work, and on public order. Some even

endanger the life, the property and the security of the public. Although these may not necessarily be illegal, yet ..." The writer then proceeds to suggest a measure to deal with these "irregular religious activities," namely, to "restrict them."

What does he mean by "irregular objectives?" How is one to determine whether a person's subjective aims are irregular? What is meant by "too frequent, too long, or too big?" How do they affect production, work, and public order? The writer does not give an accurate explanation. It is evident that these so-called "irregular religious activities" are a very vague notion.

When the government produced its important documents relating to the implementation of its policy on religion, they mentioned "regular religious activities" (which were to be protected) and "illegal religious activities" (which were to be attacked), but there was no mention of something as it were in between, namely, "irregular religious activities," an ambiguous notion. This was intentional, and not due to any neglect in drawing up the documents. They clearly pointed out the difference in attitude and procedure in dealing with two fundamentally different activities. On the one hand are those favorable to the correct implementation of the religious policy and to the correct action on the part of the relevant departments, and on the other hand those activities which are to be attacked, undertaken by those who act contrary to the law, under the guise of religion. "Irregular religious activities" are a different matter. The use of such a term could mean that some people could condemn certain religious activities which are permitted by the government as being "frequent," "long" or "big," and categorize them as illegal, subject to restriction and attack. On the other hand, it could result in certain underground illegal activities being included within the domain of those which are comparatively innocuous, and so the public would only be confused. The writer of the article has not set up a criterion for "irregular religious activities," and in fact it would be impossible to do so. Such categories as "too frequent" and "too long" are too vague, and nobody can clearly indicate any way of measuring "too." This is bound to cause confusion and problems of understanding and be open to a variety of interpretations. And when he speaks in terms of "endangering the life, the property, and the security of the public," that is an arbitrary judgment, and is mere alarmist talk, calculated to scare the public. We may well ask, if this principle is applied, and legal sanctions are applied, how anyone is to work out what is meant by "irregular religious activities'?"

The writer of the article is not only vague in his differentiation between various religious activities, but he is also lacking in any understanding of the present situation of religion in China, having failed to see what the situation is like at the present time. If we take Christianity as an example, those activities which the writer may regard as too frequent may perhaps arise from the need to satisfy the requirements of a variety of members. In the Huai'en Church in Shanghai, for example, if we merely consider the occasions for public worship, these occur three times a week, on Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday evening. This allows the members to choose the time for worship which is most suitable for themselves. Does this have an unfavorable effect on production? No, precisely the opposite. Those members for whom the time of worship would be in conflict with their regular working hours do not need to ask for time off, or

for a change of shift in order to attend worship, but attend at a time which is suitable. The provision of a greater number of occasions for going to church relieves the anxiety of the worshippers regarding their work or their study. In addition to the regular times of worship, Protestant churches hold Bible classes, prayer meetings, choir practices and similar occasions for meeting together, and activities relating to special occasions and festivals. These all form part of the Christian tradition, enhancing the quality of the believer's faith and satisfying his spiritual needs. By no means may they be described as "too frequent." Moreover, if religious believers demanded "frequency," their demands would not be met, because believers, just the same as other citizens, also have to complete their required production quota.

It must not be forgotten that China is a nation with many religions, with believers numbering more than a hundred million. They demand more opportunities for the exercise of religious activities in a correct manner. In rural areas especially, because of the limited number of places of worship, and because people's homes are scattered over so wide an area, it is no easy matter to attend a religious service even once in a while. If we consider the situation in the Protestant Church, although more than 4000 places of worship have been opened, these are a mere fraction of those which were open in 1949, while the number of Christians has meanwhile increased from 700,000 to more than four million. For a Christian in a country area to go to church to take part in a religious activity even once, quite commonly involves a journey on foot of twenty or so kilometers. Owing to their intense devotion, people are not tired out by attending services both in the morning and the evening. Is this what is meant by "too long?" Who is to decide the length of "too long?" By what standard is it to be measured?

When it comes to "too big," it is still more a question of the writer's subjective judgment. In fact, some of the places in which religious activities take place, such as city churches, are filled to capacity. In some country villages there are Christian places of worship to which worshippers come from far and wide to meet under a mat shelter. They may even meet in the open air, so their place of worship can hardly be called small. We ought to observe that this sort of "too big" is to a certain extent the result of an insufficiency of church buildings; the problem can only be solved by building more of them, not by expecting the government to use administrative measures to restrict the numbers of those attending worship. The officials involved need to take material situations into consideration to ensure the regular exercise of religious activities.

An examination of the data at our disposal makes it clear that the majority of religious believers derive satisfaction from the exercise of their activities, and they feel happy in their work. Their success in achieving a high output in production owes much to their religious faith. On the other hand, anyone whose participation in religious activities is restricted, one who enjoys no inner satisfaction, but is conscious of being repressed, cannot throw himself into his work with enthusiasm. It must be understood that religious faith is the chief mainstay of the spiritual life of religious believers. Their freedom in this respect is their basic right as citizens. We ought to be aware that in the wake of economic development there can be no question of "too frequent, too long and too big" for a number of religious believers are able to adjust their time-tables to take in religious activities. In recent years, Wenzhou has

become an area of rapid commercial and economic development. It is also an area in which there is a comparatively large number of Christians. The local Christians are very industrious when it comes to production, but they also take part in religious activities, without the one impairing the other. This is their procedure: on six days of the week they devote their energies to their daily work, and when it is suitable for the majority they increase the number of occasions for engaging in religious activities. Investigations reveal that the majority of rural Christians either voluntarily refrain from religious activities or reduce their frequency at those times of the year when work on the land is most intense. This is because they cannot be unaware that if they were to absent themselves from the fields and go to church at harvest time, the crops would not proceed unaided into the granary.

We do not deny that in some places where there has been a surge in religious activity there have been complaints of "too frequent, too long and too big" in situations where a minority of believers may justify such complaints through an excess of fanaticism. But although this may be the case, the situation can best be dealt with within the religious body concerned, rather than through the action of the authorities.

One cannot generalize about religious activities by counting the number of meetings, their length or the scale of activity, without taking account of specific situations. Research into religion involves forsaking the study to go out among religious believers to investigate, to understand, and to analyze. The writer of the aforementioned article suggests a three-fold division of religious activities, which involves the application of administrative procedures to meddle in religious matters. His threefold division does not accord with the spirit of the government's directives. Once one begins to curtail religious activities by labeling them as "irregular," there is no knowing where it would end. This kind of division may be simple enough in theory, but only leads to confusion in actual practice, involving unnecessary trouble for those who would understand and implement the Party's religious policy, and puzzling those responsible for religious activities. The lack of regard for the religious feelings of believers, labeling them as those who have "an unfavorable effect on production and on work," restricting their legitimate demands, only leads to misunderstandings among believers, injuring their feelings, without being of any avail in producing a positive attitude among believers. The expression "irregular religious activities" provides a theoretical basis for the remnant of leftist thinkers who wish to place restrictions on religion, enabling them to take shelter under the watchwords of "production, work and public order" to provide themselves with a plausible excuse for interfering with regular religious activities, exacerbating the leftist influence in some areas which runs counter to the implementation of the Party's religious policy. At the present moment the country still has no thorough law on religion, so those scholars who are engaged in religious research need to have a sense of responsibility towards religious believers, and be very circumspect in their attitude towards socialist reconstruction.

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## 5. Religious Questions in the Early Stages of Socialism – Luo Zhufeng

Since its founding, the Shanghai Society for Religious Studies has co-operated closely with the Center for Religious Research of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, has carried out a great deal of social research, and has made a preliminary investigation of several issues involving religion which arise during the early stages of socialism; we have also published a book entitled *The Religious Question During China's Socialist Era*. Furthermore, the society and the research center gave energetic assistance to an encyclopedia publisher in the writing and editing of its volume *Religion*, which sold out within a very short time of publication. This illustrates the increasing interest in religion in China, and how vitally important it is that we apply ourselves unstintingly to investigating, studying and deepening our understanding of religious work and religious questions.

Next year is the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, and also the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of Shanghai and the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the Shanghai Social Alliance, and other academic bodies are all planning relevant academic events. The May Fourth Movement was a major turning point in China's history, and was significant in three respects:

- (1) as a mass patriotic and anti-imperialist movement;
- (2) for the new cultural enlightenment movement;
- (3) as a contemporary movement for modernization.

The common slogan of the May Fourth Movement, "science and democracy," was a response to the danger faced by a semi-feudal, semi-colonized China, of being devoured by the forces of imperialism. At the same time the broad populace were languishing in a state of closed-mindedness, ignorance and backwardness where feudal control had become the guiding element of political life, and the broad masses had lost even the most basic degree of freedom and democracy. The patriotic and anti-imperialist movement, the new cultural enlightenment movement and the modernization movement therefore became a "three-in-one" task. Even to this day, we still need science and democracy, although of course we have made great progress since the May Fourth Movement, and there is really no comparison to be made.

Nowadays there are a lot of two-faced people, who say one thing at a meeting or on a public occasion, but something quite different behind people's backs. Why is it that people behave in this way -sailing with the wind, saying one thing but thinking another? I fear it is connected with our lack of democracy. People cannot normally express their opinions fully, and, in the back of their minds are often scared when it comes to doing so. The result of this, of course, is this strange phenomenon of acting one way on the surface and another behind people's backs. Since the smashing of the Gang of Four our lives have been relatively untroubled, and we have no longer had to endure the fear we felt so frequently in the past, when "you could lock the doors and stay inside, but disaster would still fall from the skies." But there's no need to deny that the degree of democracy in our society is still far from satisfactory. The saying "without democracy there is no socialism" is absolutely right. If there is a lack of democracy then how can we hope to gather the opinions of all the nation's intellectuals and people and pass them on to the highest authorities? Such circumstances can very easily lead to errors in policy-making.



In the past, the phrase "inflation" was taboo - we used to say that we had "issued a few more banknotes." This is not a scientific concept - if we've issued a few more, well how many? It wasn't until the Beidaihe talks in September 1981 that inflation was finally acknowledged for the first time, and proposals were made to redouble efforts to bring it under control. Our financial policy demands a balance of revenue and expenditure, with a slight surplus. It is impossible to describe how serious the consequences of inflation and sky-rocketing prices have been for the people! If the prices of goods are unreasonable, appropriate adjustments must be made, but the sort of sky-rocketing prices which we're seeing at the moment, and which simply will not stabilize, have put people in a state of panic, and this is a matter for real concern. In August and September the whole country was swept by a wave of panic buying, a great "whirlpool" created by the rising prices, and this forced the leaders to finally wake up to what was happening, and recognize that if things went on in this way for long, neither the people nor the nation would be able to stand it.

Besides this, there is the grain problem. As a result of natural and man-made disasters, droughts and floods, agricultural yields will probably not be as good as they were last year, and it already seems to be a foregone conclusion that grain production will show a decrease. This is a major problem, since it affects whether or not 1.1 billion people have enough to eat. From ancient times it has been said that "for the people, food is everything," and if the grain problem is not dealt with effectively it could become a major factor for national instability.

The failure to thoroughly remove feudalism is one factor which contributes to our lack of democracy. The May Fourth Movement took as its aim the rejection of feudalism, yet seventy years later too many relics of feudalism remain in China, and they have become a major stumbling block on the road to progress. After thousands of years of feudal society plus over a hundred years as a semi-colonized, semi-feudal society, feudal ideology has permeated every nook and cranny, just like quicksilver falling to the ground. Some people assume that once the land reforms were completed and the land allocated to the peasants, the task of eradicating feudalism was naturally complete as well. They simply do not realize that feudalism is still firmly and deeply rooted in the minds of the people, and is constantly expanding! Thus we must now promote science and democracy, and also a legal system, as the three magic weapons so crucial to our country's modernization.

Now I want to talk about some issues involving religion. A few days ago I went to Wenzhou - the place has really become much richer, and this does have an effect on religion. There is a great concentration of religious believers in Wenzhou, particularly in Pingyang County. In the whole area there are 320,000 Protestants, approximately half of the total for Zhejiang Province, and 9 per cent of the total number of Protestants in the whole of China. There are also 64,300 Catholics, 1,812 Buddhist monks and nuns, 615 Daoist priests and nuns, and a number of Muslims - the exact figure is not known because they live scattered over a large area. As far as the Protestants are concerned, approximately one-third support the Three-Self-Patriotic Movement, one-third oppose it or cannot grasp the principles, and another third take a middle or equivocal position. These religious believers are also involved in the economy and the manufacturing of goods in Wenzhou, and even engage in business. They are reasonably satisfied with their everyday life, and see no great contradiction between comfort in

this world and getting into Paradise. In the harsh days of the old society, religious believers lived a life of agony, suffering and hardship in this world, and yearned to go to Paradise and enjoy eternal happiness after their death; these two were irreconcilable extremes.

The great majority of believers feel little antagonism towards the government's policies of allowing one section of the populace to get rich before the rest, of internal reforms, opening up to the outside world and of developing the commodity economy; this marks a change from the traditional religious concept that "it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle." The commodity economy has broken the mould of the old small-peasant economy, with its sluggish practices - the lack of any will to expand, the tendency to cross each bridge when you come to it - and since it has now already launched into the busy, frenetic process of production and distribution, we must regard it as an undertaking to be approached seriously, and to which we should devote our full energies. As a result, there is less spare time, and so the style of worship inevitably becomes whatever is quickest and simplest; during particularly busy periods, it can even reach the stage where people don't go to church at all, but assume that because they are "thinking about it in their hearts", God will certainly "accept this gladly." This is related to the question of whether believers should withdraw from worldly matters or actively engage in them, and is therefore worthy of further study.

Some extremely complex issues are involved in the religious problems of the early stages of socialism. Besides the mass of internal religious factors, the influences and determining factors of the broader social environment must also be taken into account. During the early stages of socialism, contradictions of every kind abound, for this is still "the realm of necessity," where there is still much to be experienced in practice and explained in theory, and where "unknown quantities" may crop up at any moment. Because of certain errors of policy, frequent natural and man-made disasters, the collapse of the tradition, and a constant series of unexpected events, at a time when the people are still not completely masters of their own destiny there remains a space which religion will inevitably occupy. For a certain period of time, religion may perhaps develop. Human beings need a feeling of mental stability, and they tend, in times of crisis, to search high and low for anything which can provide a sense of "consolation" and "self-fulfillment." Thus religion can become a haven. In times of religious expansion, we should calmly and level-headedly seek the reason in historical and social factors. We must not over-react and allow ourselves to panic, attempting vainly to intervene by means of administrative measures.

No object is completely static. There is not a single second where things are not in motion, in flux, and religion is no exception. Since the climate and soil for religious growth exist, we should not imagine that it will remain fixed and constant. It is an inevitable rule that it will either expand or contract. In the early stages of socialism, unstable factors still abound and religion may well develop, as a spiritual "home" in which people can place their trust. But at the same time, the restrictions imposed by the multitude of other factors in the broad social environment make it very unlikely that religion could develop dramatically. In dealing with any ideological questions of faith which are categorized as "among the people" we should adopt a tolerant attitude and "Seek the common ground while reserving differences."

The freedom of religious belief is a basic right of the Chinese people as stated clearly in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. We ought to step up our protection of the people's religious beliefs, and not allow them to be encroached on, for religious belief is a citizen's private affair. After almost forty years of patriotic education, the mass of believers' sense of self-respect, confidence and pride in their race has risen to an unprecedented level; grounded in the reality of China, they have taken the initiative to combine their love of country and love of their religion, thus both "glorifying God and benefiting humanity"; at the same time they have built Heaven on earth. During the early stages of socialism, we ought to give an even freer hand to every religious body, allowing them to take control of organizing their religious affairs; we must alter the old erroneous habit of considering religion from a primarily political viewpoint and neglecting actual religious work. In order to encourage correct religious work, we must strengthen the sense of security, mental ease and belonging felt by the broad mass of believers. Government departments dealing with representatives from the religious world should treat them as equals, rather than lording it over them and ordering them haughtily around. We must rectify the incorrect state of affairs whereby permission has to be sought and reports written for all matters however trivial, and final decisions are made by the religious affairs bureaus, whose officials lose their temper and throw a fit if things are not exactly to their liking. Even more unacceptable is the use of power for one's own ends, growing fat on the "flesh" of the religious groups.

We must strengthen the religious functions of all religious bodies, thoroughly discuss the principles of religion, and, taking the reality of China as our starting-point, bring into full play the positive effects of religious rules and regulations on believers and tightly bind their love of their country to their love of religion. All believers are Chinese people, and so ought to love their country; and if they did not love religion then they would not be believers. The more effectively the two things are bound together, the better the noble moral character of religious believers in the new China will be displayed. The combination of love of the country and love of religion ought to be an inexhaustible spiritual well-spring for religious believers to draw on, which will be of benefit to the new China as, with the co-operation of the entire people, it builds the four modernizations.

Our country is currently energetically involved in completing the construction of its legal system - besides the constitution, civil and criminal law, and laws for civil and criminal litigation, we are also in the process of formulating special rules and regulations such as legislation governing economic and business ventures etc. The law represents the will of those vested with political power, and also the norms of behavior. It is of a compelling nature, and everyone must abide by it in common; this has a stabilizing effect on society. There ought also to be legislation for religion. We must formulate regulations concerning religion, so that there is always a law to follow and to fall back on, and everything is carried out according to this law; only then can we implement the principles of social justice, and avoid the confused state of affairs where one party says one thing, the other says just the opposite, everyone has an opinion, and there is no chance of coming to an agreement.

Religious legislation should make the protection of the freedom of religious belief its principal objective, and must be conceived in a positive light. Under no circumstances should it be based on such negative ideas as restriction and suppression, and simply set out rows of

"you are not allowed to do this" and "you cannot do that"-type clauses which stifle perfectly proper religious activities. Restrictions should apply only where religion is exploited to carry out illegal activities, in particular political crimes, such as conspiring with hostile forces to destroy the unity of the motherland, instigating rebellion by stirring up religious fervor, and the like. As for all problems which are simply ones of religious faith, complete freedom should be allowed, as set down in the law, and the policy of religious freedom should be energetically implemented.

It is my opinion that the points mentioned above are all problems which ought to be discussed and studied during the early stages of socialism, and I have raised them in the hope that my comrades will give their opinions and advice.

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Translated by Duncan Hewitt.*

## 6. What Can We Learn from Y.T. Wu Today? – K.H. Ting

Y. T. Wu was an outstanding person in the Chinese Church. He distinguished himself by consistently carrying on a dialogue with his times; he always advanced with the times. He let himself be challenged and educated by each new period and, in turn, left his imprint on the period in which he lived. He differed from most other Chinese theologians in that he did not worship foreign books, nor did he lightly accept the official Guomindang (KMT) propaganda. His own theological ideas developed through his dialogue with his times, especially through his dialogue with the young people who represented progressive trends. To use a term popular among Christians in the world today, Y. T.'s theology was quite contextual. The opposite of the contextual approach is departure from and disregard of reality, that is, saying only those things that are unrelated to any period of time, forgetting one's social responsibilities and disregarding the social consequences of one's viewpoint.

Before Liberation, Y. T. groped for the direction towards which his epoch was advancing and went forward accordingly. That did not at all mean throwing aside his faith in Christ, or carrying it like a burden. On the contrary, he deepened his faith in Christ in such a way that faith became the motive force of all his actions. Moreover, he helped a countless number of young Christians who had a sense of justice and who were eager to save China, to turn all kinds of comers to go forward with him in the same direction, and to throw themselves into the tide of the nation's advance, carrying with them their faith in Christ. At the same time, Y. T. also attracted a portion of youth outside the Christian Church and brought them into the national salvation movement. Y. T.'s main work was not that of a preacher speaking from a pulpit. But no one can deny that, by taking the particular posture he did, he witnessed to Christ in a unique way and changed people's prejudices towards the Christian religion into positive feelings. Can we say this is not preaching'? Of course not. This is very effective preaching indeed. At that time, there were many preachers and pastoral workers, but not many were able, as Y. T. was, to spread the Gospel among the fine young people who were so impelled by a sense of urgency to save the country. Due to the fact Y. T. Wu was progressive on many issues, there emerged a progressive wing in the Church, and the reputation of the Church rose. Thus, Y. T. paved the way for others to preach. I wish to ask those who like to find fault with Y. T.: If it weren't for what Y. T. advocated from that time till after Liberation, what would people's impressions of the Christian Church be? Would there be many people willing to speak up for the Christian Church, to help it enjoy its freedom and maintain its legitimate rights? How much religious freedom would you be enjoying'?

We are at the end of the 1980s. Times have changed. Our situation is no longer the same. The question arises as to what it means today to learn from Y. T. Wu. I would like to share with you some ideas on this question.

(1) Like Y. T., we must value Christian spirituality and communion with God, constantly recollecting ourselves in God's presence, waiting, listening, and deepening our awareness of the spirit so that spiritual growth may take place day in and day out.

Y. T. never publicized his spiritual life; he seldom spoke of it. But he believed and attached great importance to prayer. I will quote three things he said:

"Reading the Bible and praying are the main methods for Christian self-cultivation.... The self-cultivation of a Christian consists in maintaining throughout his or her life, the attitude of dwelling in silence in the presence of God. What prayer means above all is not so much petition as coming to a personal awareness of truth in silence. The purpose of prayer is not to make objective facts fall in line with subjective wishes, asking God to grant everything we ask.... On the contrary, prayer brings us to a state of awareness of truth and shows us the road we must follow.... Prayer puts all our subjective wishes and desires before God so that the light of truth will help us discern the black from the white, the right from the wrong, and the degree of respective importance and urgency of these wishes. We can then make decisions as to our attitudes and our actions.... Prayer lifts our life and puts it on a higher level."

"Prayer is basically an attitude of longing for God, or longing for truth.... When a religious person prays, he or she can feel consoled and encouraged in a special way because faith tells us that the truth revealed by God is the way and the life, wisdom and power, and that we share in all these when we offer ourselves to truth, that is, to God."

"Prayer integrates and harmonizes everything in life under the Will of God. The greatest prayer is not asking for this or that either for oneself or for others, but asking to know the truth, to know the Will of God in order that it may be accomplished.... The incessant prayer of one who knows how to pray ought to be "May thy will be done."

Here we see Y. T.'s sublime understanding of prayer, an understanding which is in harmony with the prayer Christ himself taught his disciples (the Lord's prayer), and with Christ's own prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is a spirituality of the most exalted kind which does not center around one's own self. It does not use prayer to make God do what we want. On the contrary, through prayer, we readjust our relationship with God, abandoning our own selfishness and seeking harmony with God's truth. In this way, we consecrate to God the potentiality within our own being so that it may flourish and be brought to a higher level and that, invigorated, we may be made partakers in God's work of creation, redemption and sanctification.

Today, our Church is weak. An important reason is the fact that our colleagues are busy attending all kinds of meetings, and attending to hundreds of small affairs. We have neglected to some degree, or even totally neglected, the need of spending time before God in listening and in waiting. And the result has been a loss of strength. That lesson is not important only for any particular period of time or any set of circumstances; it is something for all times and under all circumstances.

(2) We must pay special attention to contextualization, and restore the place of ethics and morals in our theological reflection. In our work, we must strengthen service programs.

Two or three decades before people began to talk about "contextualization," Y. T. had actually practiced it. His own reflections in Christian theology kept abreast of the work of

liberation of the Chinese people in an organic, not in an awkward way. What he taught was in fact liberation theology, although he did not use that term. Regrettably, that line of contextualized theological thinking has discontinued in China and remains on the fringes only. Our theological thinking lacks an intention to dialogue with our times and actual realities. It talks a great deal about that which is close to heaven; it says little about what is close to us.

Yes, what the Gospel gives to humankind is eternal truth. What we want to propagate is precisely this truth. But eternal truth chose the form of Incarnation to enter into our world. This should have tremendous mind-opening implications for us.

Our country was liberated in 1949. "The Chinese people have stood up." This was tremendous. This was liberation in one sense of the word. Our country is still at the first stage of socialism today and, up to now, quite a few people still suffer from ignorance and poverty in varying degrees. A further liberation from the bondage of natural and man-made disasters is needed. Liberation in this sense is bound to be a long historical process. Understanding liberation in this sense, it does not seem correct to say liberation theology is irrelevant for Christians in new China.

A cursory reading of books on liberation theology by Latin American Christians would tell us that, there, the acceptance of Christ as the Incarnate Son of God and as the Savior on the Cross who redeems human beings from sin is beyond any doubt. Those writers only re-read the Bible, teach and witness to the Gospel in relation to the questions of socio-political and economic liberation which are of general concern to the people of Latin America. In so doing, they enable Christians to start from the great love of Christ and his salvation to an awareness of their own responsibility in the task of liberation of humankind.

Taking a look at the situation of the Church in our own country today, we do see many Christians are good citizens of new China, participating in the four socialist modernizations, many giving unstintingly of themselves in the process. However, in their theological thinking, too many have kept elements that are not at all suitable to the context, elements of which the main theme is detachment from the real world. They communicate these elements and consolidate them in such a way that Christians are led to hold in contempt the real world and everything in it, whether good or bad. There is the dichotomy between theology and its context. That is to say, their acts are not supported by their theological understanding, or their acts lack theological undergirding. The effects of such unsuitable viewpoints in theology may not be felt for the time being, but in particular climates, they may play a decisive role, and unfortunate consequences will then follow.

Bonhoeffer, the theologian who was executed by Hitler because he joined an anti-Nazi organization during World War II, emphasized the this-worldly nature of Christ's Gospel. He pointed out:

"He who runs away from the earth does not find God, but only another world, his own world.... He never finds the word of God which comes in this world. He who runs away from the world to find God only finds himself."

A few hours before the execution, he wrote the following words in his prison cell:

"The Christian, ...has no last line of escape available from earthly tasks and difficulties into the eternal, but, like Christ himself ... he must drink the earthly cup to the dregs, and only in his doing so is the crucified and risen Lord with him... This world must not be prematurely written off; in this the Old and New Testaments are at one."<sup>5</sup>

These words happen to coincide with many of Y. T. Wu's sayings.

To contextualize theological thought and to bring theology into dialogue with its context—this was what Y. T. did in his lifetime. I believe this is what he would like to see us do today, not just one or two at a time, but so many that a trend takes shape.

Y. T. Wu's greatest concern was the suffering of the people. It was out of his concern for humanity and his pressing desire to rescue people from untold sufferings that he launched into the movement to save China, got involved in the democratic movement and the War of Liberation, and supported the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system.

Today, the lives of the Chinese people have improved markedly. This is not a simple matter in a country with one billion people. But there is still a long way to go before reaching the level of people's aspirations. Phenomena such as the shortage of medicine and doctors, helplessness before natural disasters, the low level of culture, the lack of civilized behavior, the numbers of handicapped, deaf and blind are not uncommon. Christians ought not to remain untouched by all these. These things ought to stir up compassion and humanitarian sentiments in Christians.

In some places in the Chinese Church, those who promote service are called "unspiritual" and scoffed at as "social gospel people." To juxtapose the rendering of service and being spiritual as two opposites is to polarize the spiritual and the societal. Then, the more spiritual one is, the less he or she will be willing to render services or to be concerned with society. That person will then be the most selfish person, "refusing to lift a finger even if by so doing, the world may benefit." Can we distort the meaning of the spiritual in this way'?

Yes, Jesus Christ is the center of Christian faith. People need to know him. It is our Church's primary duty to help people to know him. But it was precisely the same Christ who said, "The Son of Man has come, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life, for the redemption of many." This last phrase has often been used to negate the spirit of service, that is, to set Christ's giving of his life to redeem humankind at odds with service to one's neighbor. In reality, judging by this saying, "to give his life" and "for the redemption of many" both bear upon the meaning of "to serve" and constitute the supreme example of "serving the neighbor." How can it be used to negate the high place service ought to have in the Christian Church'?

Today, there are too many things to be done in China. They cannot all be done by the state. The government wishes that the people would take the initiative and engage in various works for the service of society. I think to serve is in keeping with the teachings of Christ. This is also what Y. T. Wu would wish to see. Some people have already brought up this point: What the



Three-Self Patriotic organizations advocate, that is, Love Country, Love-Church, must not remain in the realm of theory and slogan, but be made visible in deeds of service to society and to the Church. These words are worth pondering.

There are many kinds of service programs. The promotion of literacy, cleanliness and hygiene, good family relations, equality between men and women, thrift in weddings, funerals and other ceremonies, care for the handicapped, the sick and the poor, the fight against the buying and selling of brides, works undertaken for the common good and to protect the environment: all are worth our effort. All these programs can be ways and means for Christians to serve their neighbors and to witness to Christ.

For the Church to emphasize service in her works, our theology ought to hold high ethics and morals, allowing them to occupy their rightful place in our theological construction, akin to the place they have in the Bible. Given the state of the Church in our country, the starting point for contextualization seems to be the restoration of the ethical and moral content of Christianity.

Christianity is a religion that emphasizes ethics and morals. A very large portion of the Bible is on loving one's neighbor and on social justice. A Church that despises ethics and morals cannot be a Christian Church.

In the Church today, there sometimes arises a current that opposes ethics and morals. Whoever discusses ethics is thought of as belittling the gospel. Some even distort the doctrine of "justification by faith" to say that, provided one has "faith," one is insured and all one's actions - whether good or bad - are covered by the blood of Christ and the person need take no responsibility for them. As to a person "without faith," no matter what good he or she does, no matter how great a contribution he or she makes, all actions performed by such a person are necessarily against God and therefore worthless. Can such doctrines be derived from the gospel of Christ? That is going too far and has become antinomianism, the negation of law with faith.

In China where Confucianism has had a deep impact, the question of ethics is particularly important from a missiological point of view. Many have been brought to Christ because they were first attracted by the ethical content of the Gospel. When the young Y. T. Wu first came into contact with Christianity, it was precisely the most sublime and selfless ethical standard of the Sermon on the Mount that moved his heart. He said:

"One spring night thirty years ago, I was in the home of an American friend. I read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel for the first time. Like lightning, those three chapters woke me up from my slumbers. I opened my eyes and saw a vision. I saw a great, noble personality, awesome and gentle, deep and penetrating – He took hold of my soul. He almost stopped me from breathing. When I returned home, I cried out for joy. I was moved to tears. I could not help confessing to this vision, "Lord, you are my Savior."

Today, many people are searching for goodness, lantern in hand. They are looking for a good way of being in the world. They have come to the Church to look. But if our Church

slights morals, does not elevate the Sermon on the Mount, and scarcely speaks of it or of morals, is this not tragic?

To pay more attention to service goes hand in hand with putting emphasis on contextualization and on ethics in our theological work. It is integrating faith and works, knowledge and action. This is something that Christian faith implies; it is also what the Church in the context of our country needs in order to renew itself and to witness to Christ.

(3) The Church and all its organizations ought to be a school for the democratic spirit. The Church and works related to it are to be governed well by cultivating democratic habits.

During the Guomindang period, Y. T. Wu held high the banner of democracy to oppose dictatorship. The rule of the Guomindang has long since disappeared on the mainland. Today, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, China has a socialist system. Democracy has assumed a new content. In this new era, the full realization of socialist democracy still awaits broad democratic education. The Church must not exclude herself from this task.

The Christian Church confesses God as the Creator of the whole human race. Christ's redemption is extended to all men and women. The Holy Spirit inspires wisdom in all people. One finds here the seed of the democratic idea. Protestantism that emerged out of the Reformation is itself a precursor as well as a product of the democratic revolution.

Today, we are saying that the Church should not only be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, but she should also be well-governed, well-supported, and well-propagated. Good government requires first of all the development of the democratic spirit and a democratic style of work. To run the Church well implies the idea of people's participation in management. It is with the democratic spirit that we can run the Church well. At present, the Church in various places is facing a number of problems, many of which are connected with a lack of democratic spirit. To run the Church really well, any one person or any group of people cannot be allowed to lay down the law. The democratic spirit ought to permeate all church organizations on different levels.

Due to age-long conditions in China, it is still quite common to encounter patriarchal ways of running the Church, whereby one person alone has the say. This is contrary to the tradition of the New Testament Church and alien to the spirit of socialist democracy.

Before Liberation, when Y. T. Wu lived in Shanghai, he joined a particular congregation there. I wondered at the time what that church could offer to an intellectual with progressive political ideas and good theological grounding such as Y. T. I asked him that question and he answered me by saying that the congregation being Cantonese speaking, it suited him and his wife. Moreover, that was a democratic church relatively speaking, he pointed out. Representatives of the congregation were members of various organizations looking after the affairs of the church. It was not a church where one or two people laid down the law. These words impressed me deeply.

If we wish to avoid conflict and make our Church a fellowship of love, we must let the democratic spirit penetrate into all our relationships, - those among colleagues, between the pastor and the flock, between the preacher and the faithful, between the pastor and church groups, among members of each church group, among the faithful, between the Three-Self Patriotic structures and the churches, between believers and non-believers, etc. This is a necessary pre-condition. The democratic spirit consists not only of majority rule in voting, but also of respect for other people's opinion and giving them due authority if they are given their office; as well, it consists of keeping in touch and keeping informed. On major issues, we must seek consensus in charity and in a spirit of fellowship, after full consultation and discussion, having taken into serious consideration the desires and aspirations of others. We must avoid coercing others and pay attention to our unity and cooperation. We must not readily believe hearsay, and we must guard against the sowing of discord, whether done wittingly or unwittingly.

Recently we have been discussing the re-ordering of relationships. That is, re-ordering the relationship between the Three-Self structures and the churches. In the final analysis, this too is an issue of democracy. Things cannot be well done without centralization and the exercise of leadership. At the same time, we cannot afford not to let the people be masters in their own house. How to correctly understand centralization and decentralization, leadership and democracy, how to combine and unite those factors well, I think this is the assignment given us by Chairman Mao. Even in the smallest unit that is a grassroots church or meeting point, we must do our homework well.

To build our Church well is not only a demand of the broad masses of believers, it is also one made upon the Church by socialist new China. For it cannot be good for the country if all goes well in every other area except in the Church. This is why to run our Church well is an act of love for both Church and country. It is a point of convergence of loving our country and loving our Church. Reading through Y. T. Wu's writings after he launched the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, we find that he did not found the movement for the sake of founding it. His aim was the building up of the Church in China. Today, we are to build the Church. There is much we need to learn from our predecessors, each one of whom has left us with things from which we can draw good lessons. In my limited view, as we commemorate Y.T. Wu today, the three points mentioned above are what we must learn from him above all else. My view is probably biased, and I hope my colleagues in the Church and friends outside the Church will be kind enough to share their views with me.

#### Notes

1. Y.T. Wu, "On Self-Cultivation," in *Tian Feng* (12/6/1945).
2. Wu, "Christianity and Materialism," in *Dame Yuekan*, July, 1947.
3. *No One Has Seen God*, 1943.

4. Quoted by *D.J. Hall* in "A Venerable Tradition - Looking Back at the New Theology," *Toronto Journal of Theology*. Fall 1988, p. 254.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Daxue Yuekan*. July. 1947.

*From Nanjing Theological Review No. 11 (February, 1990) ,pg. 1*  
*Translated by Theresa Chu.*

## 7. Wu Yaozong and Wang Mingdao – Wang Weifan

In the early stages of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Movement, in September 1950, there were, on account of a difference in theological outlook with some of the originators of the movement, some Chinese Church workers who had misgivings in varying degrees about that movement. But owing to the essential rightness of the three-self policy, and the way in which the movement advocated mutual respect in matters of faith, the majority of those who had had such misgivings came sooner or later to support the movement. Among these we may include Jia Yuming, Yang Shaotang, Marcus Chen, Z.T. Kaung, Zhu Guishen, Qi Qingcai, Xie Yongqin, and Jiao Weizhen. So this was the basis for the convoking in 1954 of a national Christian assembly which would include Church leaders of different denominations and varying theological points of view.

At first, the attitude of Wang Mingdao was not particularly noteworthy. This was because throughout the country the number of church workers was considerable, and Wang Mingdao was simply the leader in one of the places of worship in Beijing. But the first event that caught public attention was this. Foreign sources inimical to China announced that Wang Mingdao had been put to death by the People's Government, so some people asked Wang to refute the rumor, merely to let people know that he was still alive. But he refused to do this. At that time there was a movement to obtain signatures to a statement opposing the use of the atomic bomb, but this he also refused to sign. People who were aware of what he had done were very displeased.

From this time on, Wang Mingdao's opposition to new China and the Three-Self Movement became clearer day by day.

In 1936, when the forces of Japanese aggression had spread as far as Beijing, Wang Mingdao said in the course of his preaching, "When our enemy is hungry we must feed him, when he is thirsty, we must give him something to drink," and "We must bless those who curse us, we must pray for those who ill-treat us," appealing to people to "endure unreasonable treatment at the hands of others." In 1947, he again appealed to people to "observe the law" and "submit to the authorities." But after 1949 he appealed to Christians to "risk their own lives, to be willing to venture their own lives, to be ever willing to risk death itself." This appeal to wage war may be compared with the words he addressed to a group of young people in 1948: "The Guomindang (KMT) is our true mother, but the Communist Party is no more than a step-mother."

In the issue of *Spiritual Food (Lingshi Jikan)* which he published at the beginning of 1954 he included such articles as "The Righteous Anger of Moses," "Those Who Betray the Son of Man with a Kiss" and "A Grave Warning," in which he hinted that Y.T. Wu and other leaders of the Three-Self Movement were people who were "leading Christians to refuse to believe the words of God, to listen to God's commands, to acknowledge the greatness of God, and instead to follow the world by walking along a path trodden by worldly people." They were therefore people who "betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss," with whom there could be no mutual love, "false prophets ...unbelievers" with whom one could not unite.

The attitude of Wang Mingdao did not undermine the spirit of patience and forbearance which Y.T. Wu and other leaders of the Three-Self Movement displayed towards him. Immediately before the opening of the National Christian Conference which was held in Beijing in 1954, Wu commissioned five elderly and highly respected colleagues, Robin Chen, Z.T. Kaung, Zhu Guishen, Xie Yongqin, and Marcus Chen, to visit Wang at his home, to talk things over with him and pray together, but Wang refused to see them. In spite of this rebuff, Y.T. Wu blamed himself for the failure, and said in his memoirs: "In the Three-Self Reform Movement there was a tendency in greater or lesser degree to retain denominational differences, and we would be inclined to regard those who did not join the Movement as backward. We did not thoroughly understand the circumstances of other people, nor did we realize their problems. If we had done so we might have found common ground which would have enabled us to work with them." In order to avoid any anxiety and misunderstanding which might undermine the faith of others which the expression "Reform" might imply, it was at the suggestion of Y.T. Wu that the title, "Three-Self Reform Movement" was altered at that conference to "Three-Self Patriotic Movement." In his memoirs he also said:

"This means that we must, in a spirit of love for the Church, cherish the fellowship of all Christian people, striving to do all that serves the cause of such solidarity. We must point out everything that is detrimental to such unity and correct it. For the sake of such unity we must display a greater humility than in the past, "not esteeming one's self more highly than one should." We must also help all our fellow-believers and our colleagues, our brethren and our sisters, in a spirit of love and patience. We must get rid of the pride and impulsiveness which are not befitting Christian people, sharing a common faith and common activities. For the sake of this unity, we must recognize the differences between different churches, different denominations, different theological points of view, and establish the principle of mutual respect..."

But unfortunately, Wang Mingdao took no notice of Wu's painstaking appeal. In the autumn and winter issues of *Spiritual Food* in 1954 Wang continually published such articles as "No Common Faith? No Faith At All?", "Should We Obey Man Rather than God?" and "Truth or Poison?," in which he was constantly attacking ThreeSelf. At the same time, however, *Tian Feng* did not contain a single article criticizing these productions by Wang Mingdao, but instead it reflected the tolerance, patience, and search for unity which Wu was patiently advocating.

Nevertheless, in the end Mr. Wang's attacks led to a great deal of dissatisfaction on the part of many Christian workers. When the third meeting of the Three-Self Standing Committee took place in February 1955, Bao Qiqing, Zhang Guangxu, Robin Chen, and Sun Pengxi issued a statement criticizing certain opinions expressed within the Church which were harmful to Christian unity and witness. After this, there were two issues of *Tian Feng* which contained an article by Rev. H.H. Tsui entitled "We Have to Consolidate and Broaden Our Unity" and another by the present writer, who was then a theological student, entitled "We Who Are Many Are One Body." Such statements and articles as these, although they dealt to a greater or lesser degree with the views expressed by Wang Mingdao, nevertheless refrained from mentioning him by name, though they continued to spring from the desire for

unity. In the summer issue of *Spiritual Food* that year. Wang published an article "We Stand for the Faith," in which he mentioned by name Wu, T.C. Chao, H.H. Tsui, K.H. Ting, and the present writer, while directing the spearhead of the attack at Wu and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, proclaiming, "Have no dealings with these unbelievers, and take no part in their organization." As the argument escalated, *Tian Feng* published articles by Qin Mu, Ding Lingsheng, Kiang Wenhan, Wang Weifan, Sun Pengxi, Yu Han, Paul Ye, H.H. Tsui, and K.H. Ting, which mentioned Wang Mingdao by name and dealt with his arguments. Commencing with the issue of *Tian Feng* dated 15 August 1955, in which its "Comment" referred to "The reactionary words and deeds of Wang Mingdao" and the next issue with "The reactionary standpoint of Wang Mingdao," there was a change of wording. But a later report in *Tian Feng* on "Wang Mingdao's Counter-Revolutionary Clique" was mainly a reproduction of the denunciations issuing from young Christians in Beijing after his arrest, and was probably the work of those who had previously been his supporters.

In the course of the above-mentioned arguments there are two points that are particularly worthy of notice. In the first place, Y.T. Wu from first to last wrote not a single article attacking Wang Mingdao. Secondly, the articles were fundamentally reasonable, and although they used the expression "reactionary," that was not the same as "counter-revolutionary," because attacking certain people as "unbelievers," or disapproving or opposing a particular movement or organization among Christians does not constitute the crime of counter-revolution.

There were some people in Hong Kong or abroad who did their best to arrive at the verdict that the subsequent arrest of Wang Mingdao was due to his opposition to the Three-Self Movement. This is in total disagreement with the facts. A periodical issued by the Chinese Church may touch upon all kinds of questions, and if it refers to certain individuals, that is perfectly proper and healthy. It is the regular practice with religious periodicals in other countries. To deal with three-self patriotism and Christian unity, either for or against, at that time, was perfectly natural and unavoidable. These were points at issue within the Church itself. But as for the arrest by the State of a particular individual, and his being sentenced to imprisonment, that is entirely the concern of other bodies, and was entirely beyond the authority of anyone in the Three-Self organization.

If anyone were to read the articles issuing from the arguments which took place in those days, it would be perfectly clear that prior to the arrest of Wang Mingdao, *Tian Fen*, never transgressed the bounds of reason, admonition or persuasion, whereas the abundance of Wang Mingdao's aggressive articles, the venom of his vocabulary, and his libelous personal attacks on senior leaders of the Church, are clearly evident to everyone.

Thirty years have now gone by, and the aged Wang Mingdao now lives in Shanghai. It ought to be apparent to him that during these past decades the number of Christians in our country has not been steadily decreasing under the influence of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, but on the contrary is steadily increasing, with an uncorrupted faith. Those Church leaders whom Wang Mingdao described as unbelievers, Y.T. Wu among them, endured great suffering during the dread years of the Cultural Revolution for holding fast to the faith. And was that not observed and accepted by the Lord himself? Since 1980 a fresh

generation of leaders of the Chinese Church has arisen in succession to Wu and his associates. Under their leadership the Church is striving to establish itself, and at the same time striving for the legitimate rights of the individual churches and meeting-points. Does Wang Mingdao himself not enjoy the safeguards provided by the Constitution, the freedom of religious belief which the Three-Self Movement has cherished these many years? For the past ten years, whenever there has been a National Assembly of the Chinese Church, everyone has specifically prayed for Wang Mingdao, longing for a change of heart on his part. This is in accordance with the generous spirit of forbearance displayed by Y.T. Wu.

We sincerely believe that the Lord, in his compassion and love will bestow upon the Chinese Church the wider unity for which Wu Yaozong longed.

*From Tian Feng, September, 1989, p.12.*

*Translated by Brynmor Price.*

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## **8. The Influence of Church-Run Universities and Hospitals on China's Modernization – Xiao Anping**

In modern Chinese history, the appearance of church-run universities and hospitals in China marked an unprecedented, extremely significant breakthrough in modernization which must not be overlooked. Their impact upon and contribution towards China's modernization are visible even today. Even though they were symbols of national humiliation, we cannot because of this deny that they stimulated an old and backward China.

### **Background**

The nineteenth century was an era of tremendous change. Western countries began to grow rich and strong, and thus powerful and mighty, they began to expand beyond their own borders, and China, situated in the Orient, had inevitably to face their challenge. Up until the latter half of the eighteenth century China had had only limited contact with the Western world, but towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth contacts became more frequent. Given the rapidly increasing demands for expansion of their economies and trade, Western countries began to wage war to open the doors of China. At this time China was backward, weak and powerless and the Western powers quickly initiated economic and political aggression. This is for us an unforgettable, painful memory of the results of our backwardness. At the same time Western religion followed the colonial aggressors to invade our country and sometimes even acted as their forerunner. We cannot evade this point. However we must also note that Christian evangelism and new political and economic developments in the nineteenth century were surely not unrelated phenomena. Those countries who first and most effectively industrialized were the very countries where evangelism was the most prominent. The outward expansion of religion was not entirely reliant on economic and political aggression; even where aggression was absent, this outward expansion of religion might be a by-product of domestic religious development. This was an historical inevitability. And so there were two aspects of the nature of religious penetration of China in this period, one was aggressive, the other not. Some missionaries came to China to preach purely out of religious motives and not for purposes of aggression.

When Christianity came to China, it first encountered all sorts of obstacles, of which cultural opposition was the most outstanding. Christianity had been proscribed several times by imperial edicts because it was seen as a heterodox attack upon traditional Chinese culture and because it went against traditional Chinese religions. The first Christian missionary to reside in China, Robert Morrison, arrived in Guangzhou in September, 1807. Because of the hostility and indifference which he encountered, all he could do in his first few years was put all his energy into studying Chinese.

At the time both China and the West were rather arrogant. It was difficult for Chinese to discard the notion that foreigners learned from and were transformed by Chinese culture - never the other way round. In the nineteenth century, however, both parties began gradually to change. Particularly in China, there were those who began to ponder East-West relations, and along with this, the great importance of Western knowledge for the critical task of modernization. Some

officials had already realized that there existed within China's borders other powerful centers of civilization, and that much Western knowledge and civilization was available within China itself.

If we wish to learn why in the twentieth century so many Chinese intellectuals so blithely cast aside Chinese tradition, we must study the last several decades of the nineteenth century. Perhaps we can say that the 1894-1905 (Sino-Japanese War) catastrophe was a negative awakening for Chinese intellectuals and that the Western culture brought by the missionaries exerted a strong positive attraction for them.

Since the Chinese gentry were unwilling to establish schools to introduce and import Western scientific knowledge, the church-run schools, hospitals and printing presses founded by the missionaries became important sources for disseminating scientific knowledge and methodology as well as being important models of Western organizational structures.

In the beginning, Western missionaries had not been interested in Chinese culture. They operated schools and set up hospitals as adjuncts to their proselytizing. But because their early efforts at preaching had not gone smoothly and they had encountered many setbacks, they sought another channel for their preaching. China's real need of such things impelled the missionaries to deploy large amounts of human and material resources in education; they established schools, compiled dictionaries and translated Western books. Of course, as missionaries they never forgot their primary objective. They saw education as the point of departure from which they could inculcate the Christian faith. Generally speaking, the missionaries had several motives for establishing schools.

(1) They wished to break free of traditional Chinese education, otherwise Christian tenets their converts had previously learned would be undermined.

(2) They wished to provide free education, otherwise Christianity would be a faith of illiterates.

(3) They wished to produce a group of intelligent followers so as to improve the image of Christianity in the minds of the Chinese and to train up a group of Chinese who would assist them in preaching the Gospel.

They began to found hospitals to expand their influence - with exactly the same motivation as in the founding of schools. All these church enterprises were to serve the missionaries' purposes. But looking at it objectively we can see that they also served another function-as a stimulus to China's modernization which must not be underestimated.

### **Comparisons to state-run universities and hospitals**

There were many clear-cut differences between state- and church-run universities and hospitals. The church-run institutions were good in providing what was lacking in Chinese tradition but they were also attuned to the Chinese environment and customs. There arose in church-run schools a special ethos which shaped their early history and led to their break with traditional Chinese education.

In the very beginning missionaries only took up positions in traditional Chinese schools. They taught astronomy, mathematics and geography. As their influence increased, they purchased land and founded their own schools. Control of these schools rested in the hands of the missionaries. Cheeloo University, originally the Tengchow School, was under the direction of Calvin Mateer. In 1869 it expanded to become the first tertiary level institution in China. The emergence of the church-run schools led to conflict with the state-run schools. This was not merely a result of different curriculum or teaching methods—a more basic conflict was over faith and religion. Most missionaries and Chinese Christians felt that Christians should not enroll in the state-run schools since students were required to take part in Confucian rituals. The Chinese gentry likewise felt that they could not enter church-run schools because Christian services took place there. This situation reflected the cultural differences between the two. The state-run schools represented Chinese civilization and the church-run schools represented Western civilization. Western civilization was in essence a Christian civilization; Western political structures, science and literature were not just outgrowths of Christianity but had their origins in and were dependent upon Christianity. In many senses of the word, the problems which arose from differences between the two types of schools were in fact cultural conflicts. These conflicts attracted the attention of those Chinese intellectuals concerned about the fate of the nation and its people and led them to deep reflection while at the same time impelling them to learn from advanced Western culture to make up for deficiencies in Chinese culture. This situation marked both the birth of a new culture and the disintegration and death of the old culture and the old social structure which went along with it.

There were thirteen church-run universities to be found throughout China: Lingnan University, Jinling University, Jinling Women's University, Huanan Women's College, Saint John's University, Dongwu University and Yenching (Yanjing) University to name but a few. The obvious differences between church-run and state-run universities were an intellectual liveliness, frequent debates, use of academic theories, the teaching of natural science, the admission of women, the varied and practice-oriented curriculum, the emphasis on logic and critical thinking, and academic research. All this presented a serious challenge to traditional Chinese educational theory and methodology. And the teaching of foreign languages expanded the horizons of many Chinese even further, for through language study they were able to learn more about things Western.

Church-run hospitals introduced a scientific approach to treatment which traditional Chinese medicine lacked: dissection, laboratory tests, injections, surgery and X-rays. In Guangzhou, the first missionary doctor, Peter Parker, established with three Chinese assistants the first medical school to teach Western medicine in 1837. Thereafter church-run medical schools and hospitals were established by missionaries all over China. For example, according to estimates, in Jiangsu in 1919 there were 29 hospitals in 18 different cities and counties operated by British and American missionaries. These stimulated an interest in the study of Western medicine. Sun Yat Sen's interest in medicine was aroused by the work of John Kerr (a successor of Peter Parker) in the Guangzhou Hospital in 1884. The hospital and two associated church-run schools later combined to form a medical school which was named in honor of Doctor Sun Yat-sen.

It was chiefly Christian missionaries, through the China Medical Missionary Association, who introduced and standardized terms new to the Chinese medical vocabulary such as forensics, surgery, histology, pharmacology and physiology. Church-run medical schools such as Peking Union Medical College, Shanghai Christian Women's Medical College and Hunan Xiangya Medical College, produced a new generation of Chinese physicians for the twentieth century. They were a positive force in nurturing a humanitarian spirit in contrast to the close-minded and backward world of Chinese medicine at the time.

### **Influence on Modernization**

Church-run universities and hospitals had an enormous impact upon and made an important contribution to China's development of modern science and a modern culture.

For example, Saint John's University erected a science building in 1898-99. Bu Fangji wrote that this was the first building in a church-run university devoted to the teaching of science. A missionary was employed to draft a detailed plan for higher education in China. He recommended that every university should offer the following - humanities, law, education, commerce, engineering, agriculture and pharmacology. Saint John's introduced track and field athletics soon after it was founded. The first planning for modern physical education in China was done under the leadership of Max Exner of the international committee of the Chinese YMCA. In 1923 Yenching University was the first church-run university to establish an architecture department. In the early war years it emphasized engineering, establishing a faculty of engineering in 1941 with four departments: architecture, civil, mechanical and chemical engineering, which were very influential in the development of modern industry. Added to this was the introduction of Western scientific medical techniques by church-run hospitals and medical schools. One can see that church-run universities and hospitals played a primary role in the China's technological modernization.

Church-run universities made a great contribution towards higher education for women in feudalistic China. When the government or some other organization required a female representative, they often had to choose a leader or graduate of a church-run university. For example, in 1933 Wu Yifang, then president of Jinling Women's University, represented China at an international conference of women in Chicago. Church-run universities played a very large role in the promotion of women's rights and in raising the status of women.

We must not neglect the role of church-run universities in promoting democratic government in China. Students often played an important role in democratic activities. Even though church-run universities often came under attack during anti-Christian movements, students from church-run universities often played important roles in patriotic student activities. They were instrumental in the regeneration of China's old ways of thinking and institutions. "Science" and "democracy," the by-words of the May Fourth Movement, were in fact the expression of what many young students at church-run colleges and universities had long been feeling.

For a long time church-run universities and hospitals have been perceived as instruments of cultural aggression. Yet the intentions of the foreign powers were not necessarily known to

conscientious missionaries. Some countries may have wished to create a comprador class in China, and there many have been some compradors among the graduates of church-run universities, but the examples are very few. What we do know is that famous scientists and doctors such as Zhou Peihuan, Chu Qilin, Hou Renzi and Lin Qiaoya were all the products of church-run universities as were diplomats Huang Hua and Wu Xuegian.

We must not forget that some missionaries worked in league with their governments to procure intelligence and serve the cause of aggression; but it is also true that church-run universities and hospitals served as a catalyst to and a basis for China's modernization as well. Had it not been for this catalyst, China's current efforts at modernization might have had to start from even further behind than they did.

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Translated by William J. Dockery.*

## 9. Xia Yu and Jesus: A Comparison – Wang Xuefu

Lu Xun's thinking on salvation sprang from the most profound recesses of his soul. He had the "desire to strike out ... to escape," (*A Call to Arms, 1923*) to seek a plan for national salvation. When he went to Sendai Medical College in Japan to study medicine, his intention was to save people, to save his countrymen who, like his father, had suffered from the wrong treatment. However, the contrast between his people's physical sturdiness and spiritual apathy led him to deep and painful thought and impelled him to a new choice – to give up medicine for literature. In his belief that literature could change people's spirits he was influenced by Japanese naturalistic literature. In order to establish the nation, one must first establish the people. Thus Lu Xun began to ponder the Chinese character: "What is the ideal human character? What is most lacking in the Chinese character? What is the root cause of the problem?"

He sought "warriors of the spirit;" and "voices in alien lands." (*On the Power of Mara Poetry, 1907*) What "new voice" did he find there? That of the Mara poet. "Mara" means the devil or Satan, and for Lu Xun this meant the European Romantic poets who represented the negative forces which moved society forward, poets such as Shelley and Byron. It was Lu Xun's fervent hope that visionaries such as these would appear in China, "speak with the voice of power break the bonds of loneliness, bring new life to his compatriots, and make the country prosper in the world. His emotional call to arms was:

"If we search all China today, where will we find the warrior of the spirit? Are there any who speak out in sincerity, any who call our people to goodness, beauty, strength and vigor? Are there compassionate voices which would save our people from desolation?" (*On the Power of Mara Poetry*)

The mission of the poet is to be vigilant and to speak out on behalf of the people, to be the soul and mind of the people, one able to scrutinize past and present weaknesses and discern the signs of future developments.

"Gazing at the sunrise or watching the stars come out at night, (he) would look down upon great cities, how the fortunes of men waxed and waned, pondering the vestiges of oppression and resistance from former times, while ruined cities and their impoverished inhabitants, crying out with hunger and with cold, passed vividly before his eyes." (*Mara Poetry*)

Yet finally Lu Xun had the painful feeling that in China, "though the disappearance of poets may seem a trifling matter, it heralds the onset of greater desolation (in society)." (*Mara Poetry*) Filled with sorrow, he wrote: "Our nation is laid waste, but we have as yet no Jeremiah to compose a lamentation for us that the world and future generations (may hear of our plight)." (*Mara Poetry*)

Jeremiah was a prophet-poet of the Israelites. For the regeneration of the nation he went about crying out for help, exhorting the people to faith, and admonishing them not to give up hope, because the Messiah would come in the end. He has been called the "weeping prophet."

In the Old Testament book Lamentations, he sings thus: "For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me..."

Lu Xun is the Jeremiah of the Chinese people. He was concerned about his country and his people, he always had a compassionate heart, always raised a sincere voice. He wanted to awaken the deeply slumbering spirit of his people across the vast land of China, yet: "What a chill desert, how boundless! Though Lu Xun raised his solitary 'call to arms', only echoes rose from the emptiness in reply..."<sup>3</sup> The madman and Kong Yi Ji along with their supporting characters, Ah Q and the people of Weizhuang, Old Shuan and the people in the teahouse ... with profound sorrow Lu Xun has portrayed group after group of apathetic and cruel souls in his fiction, "grieving over their misfortune" and "feeling indignant when they let him down."

At first Lu Xun was influenced by Nietzsche. But his (Lu Xun) intent was to enlighten. As for Nietzsche's superman philosophy which regarded the masses as a congenital "mob", as "trash", "mere dirt", who needed to be controlled, as insects who should give absolute obedience to the genius, this was completely at odds with Lu Xun's thinking. Though in his treatment of the national character he enumerates the drawbacks, he does so in order to draw attention to a cure. In a letter to his friend Qian Xuantong, we find this passage:

"Jesus said, if you see a cart about to overturn, put out a hand to hold it up. Nietzsche said, if you see a cart about to overturn, give it a push. I naturally agree with Jesus, but I think that if a person is not willing to have your support, then there's no reason to force it on them. Do what they say and have done with it. If later the cart hasn't overturned, all well and good. If it does overturn in the end, then go and give practical help in raising it. My elder brother, it takes less energy to raise the cart than to force it to stay upright, and in the latter case it is even more difficult to see results. To raise the cart after it falls is much more beneficial to them (the owners of the cart) than to put out a hand to hold it up when it is on the point of falling." (On *Extremities in Culture*, 1907)

Lu Xun was thus unrelenting in the task of "holding up" and "raising" in a practical manner in the great and difficult task of reforming the national character. His greatness lies in the fact that through superhuman willpower he was able to fix the tragedy of his times and the contradictions of the ego within himself where he then undertook extremely painful and strict observation and critique, profound and trenchant analysis, from which an idea would crystallize. His short story "Medicine" is based on the premise that to save the nation one must first save the people and that in order to save people one must first enlighten them. The unique depth of this idea arises from his use of two families, the Hua's and the Xia's, as metaphors for the fate of the Chinese people and of "medicine" as a metaphor for the pursuit of the means to salvation of the nation and the soul. The story was published in the *New Youth Magazine* (No.5, vol.6) edited by Li Dazhao, a special issue on research into Marxism. Was this meant to suggest to the people that they should reflect on whether the prescription for national salvation for the Chinese people which Lu Xun was seeking was to be found in Marxism? There is considerable food for thought in the idea.

Before writing "Medicine," Lu Xun wrote an essay titled: "Subjects of the Tyrant," in which we find the following passage:

"A tyrant's subjects will, in the main, be even more violent than the tyrant. The tyrant's tyranny frequently cannot satisfy the wishes of the subjects under his rule. Let us leave China aside and take an example from overseas. When the procurator wanted to release Jesus, the crowd demanded that he be crucified. The tyrant's subjects simply happily. Cruelty is their pleasure, the suffering of others their enjoyment and comfort. Their own talent lies in the lucky escape, from the safety of which they again choose sacrifice, which sates their thirst for blood, but no one understands. The one who dies says, '*aiya*'; the one who lives is happy."

Such reflections permeate Lu Xun's short story "Medicine." He links the reformation of the national character with a critique of the feudal clan system, searching for the roots of national character and exposing them as if digging up the ancestral grave. The story also expresses Lu Xun's resentment toward and sorrow over the hostility which existed toward the early revolutionaries, towards the pleasure taken in their sacrifice, towards those "subjects of tyrants" who found consolation in it.

Lu Xun's early essay "On the Power of Mara Poetry," reveals his comprehensive and profound knowledge of Biblical literature. He appreciates Lamentations, considering it the masterpiece of Hebraic literature. The book transmits the hope of the coming of the Messiah (that is, Jesus Christ of the New Testament). Like the Messiah awaited by the Israelites, what Lu Xun was seeking for his people was an iron-fisted, powerful Savior to whom he could entrust the ideals of the early revolutionaries. Like many intellectuals of the May Fourth era, Lu Xun accepted the historical person of Jesus as the liberator of political justice, the reformer of the spirit, but not as the Savior in a religious and spiritual sense. In the story "Medicine" he portrays an early revolutionary seeking liberation for the people - one Xia Yu who bears many similarities to the Biblical Jesus. In what follows, I will attempt to make some comparisons between the two.

Jesus was sold out by his own disciple Judas, who obtained 32 ounces of silver as blood money; Xia Yu was sold out by his own third uncle Xia for 25 ounces of silver.

Early in the morning after Jesus' arrest he suffered the humiliation of being slapped in the face by the guards, and after he was nailed upon the cross, the guards divided his garments among them. In prison, Xia Yu was also beaten by the jealous guard Red-eye and after his execution, this same guard took his clothes for himself, making the executioner, Uncle Kang, extremely indignant. Prior to Jesus' crucifixion, the Roman procurator, fearing he would have the blood of an innocent man on his hands, wanted to release him, but the crowd shouted for his crucifixion, asking that Jesus' blood be on them and upon their children. This "evil mob" was the same one which Lu Xun described in "Subjects of a Tyrant," one with a bloodthirsty ruthlessness. This theme is echoed in "Medicine": Uncle Kang, Red-eye, the hunchback, the guy in his twenties and the rest - among them we have the brute who beat Xia Yu, his executioner, and those for whom he was a distraction, an amusement and a comfort, as they enjoyed "Red-eye's blows."



Jesus was made fun of. While he was being nailed to the cross, his great compassion for the ignorant, apathetic people showed itself, as from a surpassing spiritual plane he said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We cannot explain this statement as unprincipled love and forgiveness, it is composed much more of Jesus' spirit rising above his human suffering, looking down and pitying the simple-minded, ignorant people: even they do not know what they are about, how pitiable they are! They did not know what was going on. In "Medicine," though Xia Yu suffered tremendous physical cruelty at the hands of Red-eye, he responded with a compassion borne of spiritual superiority which Red-eye had no way to understand: "Poor, poor thing!" This is the Xia Yu who, his expression like that of a Savior, announced to the people: "The great Qing Empire belongs to all of us."

In the course of his ministry, Jesus was rejected by the people, especially those from his hometown. They looked down on him: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?" Things got to the point where Jesus could but leave his home, and as he was leaving, lament: A prophet is not without honor except in his own country.

Xia Yu also met with rejection in the course of trying to spread revolution. His mother's remarks on visiting his grave: "none of our relatives have ever been," indicate this; furthermore it was Xia Yu's own uncle who sold him out. The people from his own village looked down on him even more. Uncle Kang said without compunction: "Who is he? Son of Widow Xia of course! Young rascal! The rogue simply didn't want to live, simply didn't want to." Remarks such as these show the people's apathetic cruelty and the resultant solitariness and tragedy of the revolutionaries. When Jesus spoke upon the cross, how could the foolish crowd understand the import of what he was saying? They made a joke of him, taunting him as "King," which they inscribed on a sign to ridicule him, to indicate that he was a madman. This is similar to the crowd in the teahouse. When they heard that after Xia Yu had been beaten, he said: "Poor, poor thing!" they thought he was begging for mercy from Red-eye's blows. When they understood that this was not the case, they were thrown into confusion, "suddenly saw the light" and said "He must have been crazy!" "He must have been crazy" passed from person to person, resounding cruelly and shrilly in the teahouse, like the sounds which lingered, endlessly resounding, in the air over Golgotha. The souls of the foolish Israelite crowd of one thousand nine hundred-odd years before had not dispersed, but had been reborn in China as evil spirits and monsters.

In the somber conclusion to "Medicine" we see Widow Xia and Old Shuan's wife at the cemetery. Here we have a strong, shocking contrast with a gloomy tenor overlying the whole. There is the contrast between the characters and their surroundings, between the characters, between the living and the dead, between the dead, between two hearts, and the contrast of psychological states to the surroundings. All without exception show forth the profound depths of Lu Xun's pen. We can also make a comparison in this scene between Widow Xia and Old Shuan's wife and Jesus' mother Mary and the women at the tomb:

As his mother, Mary did not entirely understand Jesus' mission, and this failure to understand had begun in Jesus' youth. The Bible records that once when Joseph and Mary took the boy Jesus into the town for a religious festival, Jesus left them while they were on the road and went to the temple to discuss the word of God with the elders there. His parents thought he was lost. When they found him in the temple, Mary scolded her son as a mother would and Jesus said: "Don't you know I must be about my father's business?" This happened when Jesus was twelve years old and he was then already preparing to leave his parents in order to preach the gospel. When Jesus was an adult he took part in a wedding feast in Cana where he performed his-first miracle. Then the son scolded his mother for her lack of understanding of him: "What have you to do with me?" Finally, when Mary saw her son nailed upon the cross, her sorrow as a mother was naturally uncontrollable; yet as a human being, she felt the same sort of shame at her son's suffering as Widow Xia, because crucifixion was the most shameful and cruel punishment, and at that time Jesus had been rejected by the multitude. The crucified Jesus was very clear on this point, saying to his mother: "Woman, behold your son!" "Son" meant his beloved disciple John. To John he said: "Behold your mother!" And in this way he gave his mother to John to alleviate her suffering and shame at losing her son, and Mary became part of John's family. These two statements of Jesus are imbued with his deep love for and understanding of his mother. He had seen into the deepest recesses of her heart. Lu Xun grasped this point with great acuity. At the cemetery when Widow Xia saw Old Shuan's wife, "she hesitated and a flush of shame spread over her pale face. However, she summoned up courage to cross over to a grave in the left section, where she set down her basket."

Because she had no way to understand Xia Yu's revolutionary activities and death, Widow Xia felt estranged from her own and ashamed in front of others. Only when alone did she let her sorrow show. Lu Xun's "distortion" - the wreath of flowers on the son's grave - makes the mother even more bewildered. Her old eyes are blurry, at first she thought there were just a few scattered pale flowers. But when "...the old woman had gone up to the grave to look more closely. 'They have no roots,' she said to herself. 'They can't have grown here. Who could have been here'? Children don't come here to play, and none of our relatives have ever been. What could have happened?' She puzzled over it, until suddenly her tears began to fall, and she cried..."

In the Bible, before Mary Magdalene and the other women came to the tomb, they saw that the stone that had been blocking the tomb had been rolled away, and upon entering the tomb they saw the grave clothes to one side, but did not realize that this was the fulfillment of the Old "Testament prophecies concerning Jesus' resurrection after death. Mary stood outside the tomb and wept, tears obscuring her sight. She could not see clearly and when Jesus appeared to her she did not recognize him, she thought he was a gardener. Only when Jesus called her name did she know him and cried out joyfully in Hebrew "Rabboni!"

The wreath in "Medicine" and the grave clothes in the Bible have a symbolic meaning, revealing a new hope to people. Lu Xun used the wreath to hint that there were successors to the revolution who would be carrying on revolutionary activities in secret, that they secretly honored their revolutionary martyrs with flowers and carried on the struggle. The grave clothes left at the tomb in the Bible suggest a future hope for Jesus' disciples: He had fulfilled the

words of the prophets and had risen again after three days. However, neither Widow Xia nor Mary could comprehend these signs.

When the women reached the tomb in the Bible, they saw that the stone had been rolled away and upon entering the tomb they saw an angel, "his face was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow," sitting on the stone which had been rolled away, who asked them why they were seeking the living in the place of the dead, because Jesus had risen. They ran from the tomb, trembling and amazed to tell Jesus' disciples, but those men did not believe it. The risen Jesus appeared to the disciples and scolded them: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

In "Medicine" as Widow Xia looks around she sees a crow standing on a bare tree and asks superstitiously that her murdered son's soul give her a sign through the crow. In the Bible, Jesus' spirit appears through the body of the angel, to tell the people the news that he who was dead has risen. But unlike the Biblical cemetery which shook like an earthquake, this cemetery is "deathly silent." Unlike the angel with the "face like lightning" and "raiment white as snow", the crow (black) "its head drawn in, stood immobile as iron"(silent). The understanding of Mary and the other women, like that of Widow Xia, was to mourn the murdered Jesus. When they met the angel and heard his words, they were terrified. In "Medicine", the crow's final loud "caw," caused the two women "startled" to turn their heads. In the Bible, the risen Jesus scolds the disciples for not having believed the words of the prophets: "O foolish men." In "Medicine" Xia Yu in his tomb is silent, but Lu Xun uses the flower wreath on the tomb to designate his hope: the heroic soul of the revolutionary is risen in the hearts of others. With these profound touches, full of grief and indignation, Lu Xun accuses ignorant souls; with bold strokes he describes the ignorant commonplaces of this feudal town and the somber graveyard. As if he can no longer bear these desolate feelings, in the denouement there is a sudden raucous sound as the crow stretches its wings. The crow symbolizes the visionaries who "speak with heroic voice," who are "strong" and "rapidly advancing," shattering the grave-like solitude that is China. At the same time he deals a severe metaphorical caution to Widow Xia's superstitious hope. We seem to hear Lu Xun's stern shout: Fools! All the prophets have spoken, but you have been too slow to believe.

Jesus held the Last Supper the night before he was crucified. During the meal, he instructed the disciples to eat the bread and drink the wine which he had blessed, because the bread represented his body and the wine the blood of his covenant with the people. They were to do this in memory of him. This is the source of the Communion service of the Christian Church, demonstrating Christians' loyalty to the Lord's Way and the hope to carry forward the gospel. In "Medicine" Lu Xun turns this symbolism on its head. For Lu Xun the steamed bread and human blood are metaphors: Little Shuan eats the bread dipped in the blood of a revolutionary martyr, but this cannot cure the malady of apathy which afflicts the national character. This superstition-imbued tragedy continues in the graveyard with its spectral air, continues across the vast land of China. This caused Lu Xun to say "Throughout our country we find not one good image." Despite this, Lu Xun yet shouts his call to arms and his mighty pen still industriously cultivates the desert of the souls of China.

During the creative process of writing "Medicine" Lu Xun was influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the image of Jesus. He does not directly describe the revolutionary activities of Xia Yu, but devotes most of his effort to the sufferings of the revolutionary and the responses these engendered in others. This makes the comparison with Jesus all the more apt, and is a wonderful and profound way to draw lessons. At the same time, this is in line with Lu Xun's thinking on visionaries: "Not that none has been born to us, but rather that when they appear, they are struck down immediately by the masses." (*On Extremities in Culture*) Jesus said to the multitude: "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?" This is what Lu Xun means. The visionaries have been murdered, China is thereby desolated, and there is no visionary voice to break through the desolation. Filled with indignation and fury, Lu Xun wrote: "Does this then mean we are to stay lost in silent thought, that this is all we can do?" (*Addenda Collection, 1935*) Lu Xun lifted his head from silent thought to raise his call to arms. "Medicine" is his most indignant, profound cry.

*An English translation of "Medicine" may be found in Call to Arms, trans. Yang Hsien .yi and Gladys Yang. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1981. All quotations from the story are taken from this translation.*

#### Notes

- 1 . Xu Shoutang, *Remembering My Friend, Lu Xun*.
2. The title of a collection of Lu Xun's short stories.
3. Qu Qiubai, *In the Desert*.
4. A device used by Lu Xun to alleviate the pessimism of his stories.

*Slightly abridged from The Nanjing Theological Review, No. 10 (June 1989), p. 97.  
Translated by Janice Wickeri.*

## 10. God is God (in memory of Karl Barth) – Liu Xiaofeng

In 1968 the massive student movement burst upon the scene in Europe and America, a movement which symbolized the entrance of the developed countries of the West into another phase of social development. Prior to this, European society did not enjoy full democracy, freedom, wealth and equality. On the contrary pre-sixties Europe could best be described a scene of poverty, unrest, bloodshed, despotism, depression, and hesitation, among vistas of the ruins of war.

It was in this year of 1968, which we might well take as a watershed, that the most outstanding European Protestant theologian of this century, Karl Barth, died in Basel, Switzerland, as if his life and theology had come into being for the sake of the deprivations of the human world; as if happiness and good fortune had nothing to do with him. Indeed, Barth's theology has been called a theology of crisis, produced by crisis and waging a death-defying struggle in the midst of crisis in order to protect the word of God.

However, if Barth could have lived a few years longer, he would certainly have been an active supporter of the new student movement. Barth was not a theologian who shut himself away in his study. He had always been concerned with real society and had always participated in political activities. It was just that his political activities differed in character from those of most people: he firmly denied unsurpassed value, let alone a sacred nature, to any human behavior, including political behavior. No wonder then that Barth never saw eye to eye, politically speaking, with the government in power and its ideology. He had realized that the sanctification of secular action, secular power and secular movements lay at the root of the twentieth century European crisis.

For example, on achieving power in 1933, Hitler asserted the sacred character of his party, the state and its mission. He called upon everyone to comply and devote themselves to his cause, claiming that his political movement was of divine intent and based on revelation, and on these grounds he called upon the Christian Church to obey Nazi leadership and become a propaganda tool of fascist politics (those who responded to his call became known as the "German Christians"). Hitler held many discussions with well-known religious figures and through a combination of threats and promises vainly attempted to force them to sanction the secular power as sacred. In the face of such naked tyranny, Barth put forth a strong counterattack: only God is sacred and His divine word is expressed only through the suffering Jesus Christ. All attempts to usurp this sacredness must be judged unrelentingly. In 1934 as leaders of every German Protestant denomination held the famous anti-Nazi meeting in Barmen, Barth was an active participant and the renowned Barmen Declaration which they passed was largely the work of Barth's own hand. Barth the theologian is celebrated not only for his great and prolific thought but for his steadfast anti-fascism.

The sanctification of secular authority, the idolatrous regard for the politicians of history, and the mythologization of political power are found in the East as well as the West; in the present as well as in the past. This is in spite of the incredibly high price in blood humanity has paid and-though we hope people never forget the bloodstains in the concentration camps - no

one can guarantee that the sacred will never be so terrifyingly abused again. In this regard, Barth's theology has not become outdated, neither by his death nor by the movement of society toward another phase. The issues Barth pondered do not involve only one era or only certain people, but all times and all peoples. If the Chinese are human beings first of all, then naturally these things affect the Chinese people as well. To all secular thinking which deified the ego, Barth gave a firm polite answer: The world is the world. But God is God (*Welt ist Welt. Aber Gott ist Gott*). This statement is certainly relevant for us.

(1)

False claims about the sacredness of their mission by secular powers, and dictators who make false claims about the sacredness of their word in order to cheat people of their devotion and dedication are innovations of the modern era as far as Western history is concerned. We know that since the founding of Christianity, secular Western regimes have always been either tangibly (through the church) or intangibly restricted by sacred power. With the nineteenth century, some thinkers declared that sacred power had been abrogated, and there consequently appeared secular movements which flaunted their own sacredness. Yet, what most shocked Barth were certain opinions held by many theologians and religious thinkers, such as: that the church's advance toward socialism marked the gradual appearance of the kingdom of God, that Jesus was a social movement, that the social movement was the Jesus for today. God's kingdom became equivalent to the social movement; the sacred equivalent to the profane. Barth felt that this was a sign that Christian theology had fallen into a crisis, and that because of this, it was necessary to reflect anew on the foundations of theology.

Barth was born in the Swiss town of Basel on 10 May 1886 to an old established Protestant family. His father was a professor of New Testament, his mother the daughter of a quite renowned Reformed pastor. From boyhood Barth was conversant with the thought of Schleiermacher, the most important Protestant theologian of the nineteenth century, and he was also fond of Kant. He pursued his studies in the theology departments of Bern, Berlin, Tübingen and Marburg universities, where in addition to Herrmann and Heitmüller, Koechlin and Natorp had the greatest impact on his thinking. But most formative for Barth's theology were Kierkegaard (in particular his concept of the infinite qualitative difference between God and humankind), Dostoyevsky and Overbeck.

Barth's refusal to equate the kingdom of God with the goals of the social movement was not in any way due to a lack of awareness of human suffering, but quite the opposite. The young Barth went to Safenwil after graduation from university. As a parish pastor he was profoundly in touch with the sufferings of people in the lower echelons of society, especially the workers. This caused him early on to turn to real social issues in his theological theorizing and in practice, and in 1915 he joined the Social Democratic Party. Barth also became personally involved in socialist religious activities. The harsh realities of the First World War woke him to the dangers of religious theory based on utopian socialism. The mistakes of the liberal theologians and the socialists impelled Barth to reflect anew on the foundations of theology.

For Barth, decisive steps in this regard meant a total starting over in theology, beginning with the sole witness to the word of God, the Bible. The Bible was the one true foundation and the primary basis counterpoised to the pretended sacred word of secular thinking.

In 1916, Barth set about writing his *Commentary on Romans*, an epochal work which has been called "a bomb tossed into the theologians' garden." In it Barth used traditional methods of Biblical commentary to develop a theological critique reaffirming the transcendence of God, the fact that God is beyond any human feeling or experience. The book stated its purpose and main theme in no uncertain terms from the very beginning: "With regard to the tidings of God ... these are in no way human religious theory ... it is not a kind of truth, it is truth itself, *die Sache selbst* (reality in itself), and "it is only through Christ that we come to knowledge of God. In this knowledge, God is not our opposite, but rather is directly and creatively drawing near to us."

Barth's intention is perfectly clear: to depart from the Biblical source in discussing the sacred is mere human arrogance. The gospel can only be described dialectically with explication of the original context. The word of God and the words of Man (sic) must be strictly distinguished, or the results will be disastrous.

## (2)

The concentration camps of the twentieth century have taught people in both the West and the East a bitter lesson which might be said to have two aspects: first, that all these tragic atrocities were carried out under the rubric of a "sacred" mission; second, that so very many enthusiastic and sincere people accepted this "sacred" call, voluntarily and enthusiastically devoting themselves to it with the result that they became instruments of evil.

We should reflect deeply on this: Why are there people who dare to wave the banner of the "sacred" to deceive the people, and why do we go so far as to believe in the "sacred" when it issues from the mouth of evil?

Here, Barth's theological critique is enlightening: For the past two hundred years (especially in the nineteenth century), theology has been transposed into a product of the study of "man" to such an extent that it has evolved into anthropology, and this too has had negative consequences. The ideas that the concept of God is an alienation of human nature, that God is the projection of human ideas and Heaven no more than the reflection of an illusion which cannot be realized on this earth, that religion is no more than an illusion to which people entrust their hopes for the hereafter: all enjoyed a vogue in nineteenth-century Germany. Hegel's principle of the sacred entered in the world, into history and was stood on its head, the world and history being thereby sanctified and the kingdom of God becoming a fiction. In a word, God became a human creation and it was said that the mystery of religion was solved in anthropology.

After experiencing this so-called laying bare of the mystery of Heaven, some people grew even cockier. Was not God a human creation? We can all become gods. There has never been the Lord, we are all lords. However, God made humankind in the image of God and the human soul is endowed with a measure of the breath of God. Now in what image do humans create God? Is it not in the form of a bunch of demon idols'?

The reflection on the foundations in Barth's theology refuted the human -centeredness of this type of theology: Humans fundamentally had neither the ability nor the qualifications to discuss God, they could only accept the revelation of God and only through this could humans know and understand who God is. Christian faith has nothing to do with either irrational mysticism nor with the rationalism which uses human rationality as a yardstick for the possibility and reality of God.

Numerous Gods have appeared in the modern age: that drawn out by ordinary scientific concepts, that based on anthropology (so-called human will and hopes), the God predicated on philosophical systems or other definitive knowledge. The results of all these are obvious. Barth's dictum "but God is God," is a word of warning to the world: human beings can in no way equate God with categories, forms, concepts, needs, etc., devised by human thought. The divinity of God is fundamentally not a human creation. God bears no relation to human rationality, theories, illusions or even religion, and furthermore is infinitely different and removed in nature from all that exists in the world. God cannot be known. If in the midst of suffering on the cross God had not explained himself to humankind, how could we know who God is!

### (3)

With Hitler's accession to power in 1933, there began the sanctification of the German race and political mission, a vain attempt to usurp the divinity's place. It was in that year that Barth published his denunciation "*Theologische Existenz heute!*" ("Theology Exists Today!"). Nearly forty thousand copies were distributed in Germany and one was even sent to Hitler himself. In this declaration, which was later known as the basic anti-Nazi document of the German Protestant confessing church and the cornerstone of the Barmen Declaration, Barth states clearly as a theologian: There will be no countenancing the sanctification of secular forms, nor the secularization of things sacred.

Barth points out that the sacred and all things of this world can be distinguished into two forms. *Das Gottliche* (the sacred) is sufficient unto itself and in no way dependent upon the non-sacred. The inbreaking of the sacred into the human is entirely a matter of the movement of the sacred from upper to lower, of God condescending to humanity. This movement was revealed only in the sacrificial suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ, only Christ is the miracle of God's revelation. Theology is an attentive listening to this revelation and explains the gospel brought by Christ.

There is an obvious contradiction here: since news of God is revealed to humanity by God, there is no way to know the form of God through human intelligence and imagination - therefore Barth uncategorically rejects natural theology. Theology however is after all human speech, how then can it interpret the sacred word?

Barth does not evade this contradiction but accentuates it: as theologians we should speak of God, but as humans we cannot speak of God. God alone can genuinely speak of God.



From this Barth decrees the character of Christian theology as humility, implying that theology cannot itself determine its subject matter. Rather the subject matter is revealed. For the subject is not only God, but the God of revelation, and news of God's revelation was bestowed upon humanity only through Christ. It is this news only which is the genuine subject of theology.

This character then went on to determine that Christian theology could not be systematized, because there can be no conclusion, it is eternally *neu mit dem Anfang anfangen* (a beginning over again), an eternal pilgrimage - *theologia viatorum* (pilgrimage theology). The idea that theology could develop a pure doctrinal system such that the essence of Christianity once established required no further input, is really preposterous. In Barth's view, without humility there is no possibility of theology.

In terms of the history of Christian thought, the greatest of the founders of twentieth-century Protestant theology after Schleiermacher is Barth, who raised the banner of revealed theology anew. Yet Barth was in no sense anti-rationalist. In his view, God's revelation in itself surpassed any opposition to rationality. The essence of Christian faith is *fides quaerens intellectum* (a knowledge-seeking faith). Revelation neither defrauds nor writes off the intellect, but humbles it as well as inspires and stimulates it. What Barth could not abide was human willfulness in explaining God, our obstinacy and arrogance, as if some of us humans had never conscientiously listened for the word of God-Jesus' suffering and sacrifice - but flaunted our willfulness and arrogance in berating God for that suffering and sacrifice.

#### (4)

Barth's theology is generally seen as having three stages of development: 1) from his youthful pastoral experience to the first edition (1919) of *Commentary on Romans*; 2) his dialectical theology stage including the publication in 1927 of his *Die Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*; and 3) his dogmatic theology period, marked by publication of his epochal work *Church Dogmatics*, the first volume of which appeared in 1932.

Prior to undertaking a comprehensive revision of *Commentary on Romans*, Barth wrote a report, "The Christian in Society," which greatly enhanced his reputation in Germany. Its famous antithesis "Christ is that in us which is not of ourselves" marked the inception of dialectical theology.

"Dialectical theology" was not by any means Barth's own creation. It was a theological movement among whose representatives were the great theologians Brunner, Bultmann, Thurneysen, and Gogarten, as well as Barth. But for Barth "dialectical" had richer and more unique connotations. In 1922 Barth published his revised *Commentary on Romans*, which was to be the most influential document of the new theological movement, and later, Barth, along with Brunner, Thurneysen, Merz and Bultmann started a journal which was the mouthpiece of dialectical theology, *Between the Times*, the name of the journal itself reflecting the character of dialectical theology.

On hearing the word dialectical, we naturally think immediately of the dialectical method of Hegel and his disciples. But Barth's concept of dialectic had nothing to do with theirs. Not only that, but it has an entirely different tone to it. There was about the former a measure of human arrogance, a boast that the human spirit could comprehend the spirit of the world and the laws of history. Contrary to this, for Barth, "dialectical" first of all implied a self-recognition of the broken nature of human thinking: human ideas were ever caught up in contradictions, basically with no hope of reaching a synthesis. The synthesis was reserved for God. Therefore human thought should be reverent and humble.

Dialectical theology may be called the theology of crisis of the period between the world wars. It strove to demonstrate that there was an essentially dialectical relationship between transcendence and immanence: "Only what undergoes the negation which comes from God and the negation intended by God will be affirmed. All that which is not established through this judgment of God which he carries out with a positive, that is saving, purpose is negative. The affirmative of God is negative in form." This implies that what is sacred can only meet with negation in the world and in history. But in transcendence it is affirmed. Its opposite also holds: that the things of this world and of history are affirmed in this world, but negated in transcendence. Therefore, the social values of the world (authority, the family, the state, even religion itself) meet with a theological negative, and this negative should be explained as a genuine affirmation. For example, faith, hope and love directed to the sacred are here repeatedly negated, are they not, and judged as useless. But the more they are negated in this world, the more they possess a truly positive nature.

God, however, is not in this opposition. "God has no essential connection to the opposition between this and that. God is pure negativity and thus God is THE transcendent, both in relation to this world and to transcendence itself. This implies the death of our death, the non-existence of our non-existence." Therefore, there is only God in the synthesis.

Yet, it is only because of God's sacred existence that we can negate all evil and lack of freedom in reality, otherwise we lose the basis for negation and judgement. According to Barth, only by taking a firm critical stance toward this present world will we be able to recognize the things in this world which are of the sacred.

Due to his unflinching critique of the ego-sanctification of Nazism, Barth was forced to resign by the Third Reich Minister of Education in June 1935 and all his works were banned from publication in Germany. Barth was compelled to return to the University of Basel, where he continued his anti-fascist scholarly activities. The negation of Barth in Nazi Germany was genuine affirmation.

## (5)

During an interview, Barth characterized the object of his lifelong theological pursuits as "for this world, for God who is the God of humanity." In Barth's eyes, when people as human beings moved toward God, they were not moving toward some sort of truth, but towards truth

itself; they were not moving toward some sort of goodness, but towards goodness itself; they were not seeking an ordinary response, but an answer which would directly become one with the human question, because humanity in itself is the question. Therefore the answer is the question itself, because what humanity is seeking from God is not an answer, but salvation.

But the God of Christianity is not one God among many. God is not a human concoction or the invention of human religion, not something humankind has tracked down, not supreme existence. God absolutely transcends us, in whatever sense of the words, in Himself and for Himself. Thus not only does humanity have no way to witness to or investigate God, humankind cannot comprehend God either. Then how do we mortals come into contact with God?

Barth believed that though God was supreme - whether humankind revered or profaned God would not in any way reduce God - but out of loving concern for humanity and the world, God once turned toward that world and gave of Himself to the world, let Himself be known by humanity. This was God's loving initiative revealed through Jesus. But when Jesus came into the world he met with negation from humanity and was crucified. The suffering and sacrifice of Jesus on behalf of humanity was the self-revelation of God. Only by knowing the suffering and crucified Jesus could humans know God. "Whoever wishes to discuss God on the basis of the meaning of the Bible, must continually speak of Jesus Christ."

In the late 1920s, Barth began his greatest piece of scholarship: the Church Dogmatics, which he sustained for thirty-odd years, completing four parts in twelve volumes (the fourth part was unfinished at his death). At the time Barth felt that the term "dialectical" had become overly ambiguous and he gradually abandoned its use, turning to the study of church dogmatics.

What is church dogmatics? According to Barth, the central mission of the Church is to propagate the gospel, to witness to the word of God. Dogmatics is the critical investigation-with the Bible as its standard-of the faith the church is propagating, undertaken in order to prevent its being led astray. For Barth, the upholding of God's word is of the utmost importance and the incarnation of Jesus Christ, his suffering, death and resurrection is the sole word of God. Outside this, there is no other path to knowledge of God. Today, people create all sorts of false gods, put forward evil and falsely call it sacred. All this is due to their separation from the word of God. There is no way we can speak of the revelation of Christianity in the same breath as any trumped up human revelation. The sacred is the sacred, but the sacred has voluntarily suffered in order to call us to faith, hope and love.

The position of Jesus is that He is both the true God who is the loyal companion of humanity, and the true human who is the loyal companion of God; both the Lord who has come down to be with humanity and the servant who rose to heaven and is with God, who speaks both from the heights of transcendence as well as the voice heard in the darkest depths of immanence.

We have only to hear and believe the tradition of "carrying out justice on Heaven's behalf," but "Heaven" is not God, "reason" is not God either for no one has seen God's saving affection and merciful grace. We no longer believe in such absurdities as "carrying out justice on Heaven's behalf" today; consequently, there are those who rail at God. But have these people ever truly been touched by the word of God? Do they know who God is?

Whatever the case, Barth's warning to those who would here speak of God is certainly not out of keeping with the times: God is God. We should speak of God, and yet we cannot. But in this we venerate God.

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## 11. A Christian Perspective on the Traditional Chinese Concept of Man – Zi Zhu

Traditional Chinese culture is grounded in moral principles. The level of a society is seen as commensurate with its ethics, and it is through this that social stability is achieved. However, the individual is often overwhelmed in this social network of ethics, becoming just one knot among the many that make up the net. With no position of his or her own, no subjective consciousness, and no way to transcend the network, a person can only pursue inner self-realization, self-comfort, and self-appreciation. Traditional Chinese morality is in fact an immoral type of virtue. From a Christian perspective, the personalities it forms are frequently lacking in nobility of purpose, wholeness, and harmony. In the absence of a "larger human consciousness," "notions of self-sacrifice," and "a sense of repentance," they lack an inclination to the metaphysical. While Christianity is, of course, not necessarily able to save Chinese culture, it may at least serve as an excellent system of reference for the rebuilding of Chinese ethics, especially in its understanding of and formation of the individual.

### (1)

According to the *Erya Dictionary*, in the Chinese term for ethics, *lunli*, *lun* may be explained as ripples, which spread outward ring by ring when a stone is cast into the water. In the agrarian culture of China, because the clan is the center of traditional ethics, each family within the clan, each self within the family is located on a certain wave ring or cycle. Once cast into society, no one escapes the special *lun* from which he or she enters into relationships with "others."

Of the traditional five relationships, three [father-son; husband-wife; brother(older)-brother(younger)] are familial; the others [ruler-subject and among friends] do not involve members of the family, but are in fact extensions of the family, or extended families. The ruler of the state is without question the head of a great family, hence the term "father-official". Fei Xiaotong writes "there are no strict group boundaries to the family, and the components of such a social grouping may, according to their needs, expand toward the larger society on the basis of kinfolk order." Friends call each other "brother," and go so far as to say "all men are brothers." Thus we may say that traditional Chinese ethics are "familial or familicized ethics." As such, they are naturally inseparable from the patriarchal (clan system) spirit in politics in which all are called upon to respect the Son of Heaven (the emperor) as the dynastic heir. In the state, respect the ruler; in the family, respect one's elders. This is a natural dependence. The state and the family are one body; the state being a big family, the family a little state. Essentially, the state and the family are the norm, not the individual. An appendix to the *Book of Rites* says "The ruler is the subject's bend; the father is the son's bond, the husband is the wife's bond." There is no way for anyone to detach themselves from this ethical network. Every individual is situated in the warp and woof of the patriarchal clan system and the feudal system, whether it be the patriarchal state or the patriarchal family. The Song-dynasty Confucian Sun Fu said "The monarch is the most revered, with whom none under Heaven can compare." According to Sima Guang: "A wife must obey her husband all her life; a subject

must wholeheartedly serve the ruler; this is the highest human moral principle; if this were to be abolished, great chaos would result." It is the view of the two Chengs (Cheng Hao 11031-10851 and Cheng Yi 11032-11071) that for women, "death is a small matter, but the loss of virtue is a serious one." All of this can be summed up in an extreme example: if the father tells the son that he must die, then he has no other choice; if the ruler orders the subject to die, then he must die. The ruler-subject, father-son, and husband-wife relationships are relationships of absolute domination and obedience. Here is the true essence of such an ethics: it aims to engender in a person's very marrow a "submissive nature," such that an individual no longer belongs to him- or herself, but to the ruler, to the father, or to the husband.

If the "ego" can still be said to exist at all in human relationships, then it exists on the subordinate level of subject, son, or wife and the say over the life or death of this subject, son or wife, "is in the hands of the Son of Heaven (the emperor)." Self-preservation compels a person to become a slave or a tool. If a person has no self of his or her own, it is useless to speak of self-realization. No wonder some say that traditional ethics bestows only a slave or servant mentality (or a son or female mentality) upon a person and nothing else; the male character or leader mentality of Western culture is absent.

In the ethical network individuals must submit to a system of relationships which distinguishes between the humble and the lofty, the subordinate and the principal. Lofty-humble indicates one's position in society, principal-subordinate refers to relationships in which one occupies a subordinate position. In society, everyone is a son, a descendent or a slave in the ruler or father's house. Each person's social standing defines him or her as slave or tool: as one without rights who can be ordered about, enslaved, and used. The individual has no subjective identity and no independent personality. Traditional ethics leads to irrationality in the whole society: there are only the governing orders and the blind followers.

In the extended family with the ruler-father as its nucleus, as a result of successive policies of moral education, the slaves put themselves under the master's foot with complete willingness. Moral education stresses "propriety" (*li*), "benevolence" (*ren*), "filial piety" (*xiao*), "loyalty" (*zhong*), and so on in human relationships. Each person's "status," is defined, each one assigned a place to be kept to. "Look not at what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety." (*Analects*, XII; Legge) Because in traditional China propriety was not a way to foster bonds of human intimacy and affection, but rather a way to confirm each one's position and to give each person in the society an assigned role to play, what came of knowing and practicing propriety was not warmth and sincerity toward others but a restrained, inhibited ego and appetites. The "polite effacement" and "yielding place to" of Mencius do not proceed from any genuine sharing of emotions, but from a recognition of the other's status as either lofty or humble and a concomitant restraint of the ego, according to Confucius' dictum that there are "three things of which the superior man stands in awe: the ordinances of Heaven; great men; and the words of the sages." Only by revering the other and abasing the self, can one come to a consciousness of one's own position.

The concept of filial piety (*xiao*) in traditional culture does not arise from a sense of equality (in terms of human dignity) either, but from a situation in which family affections

have become institutionalized, regimented and one-sided. This state of affairs demands that a person totally abandon his or her own personality and submit to the father or the ruler. "If the ruler requires that the subject die, not to do so would be disloyal on the part of the subject; if the father requires that the son die, not to do so would be unfilial on the part of the son." There is no human emotion in this, just cruel domination where the will of the father or ruler must be obeyed. In such an ethical network as this, the individual is the object of regulation, classification and delineation, and can never gain the initiative. Benevolence and putting oneself second illustrate that the individual can only be determined within the ethical network. A person is a perpetual infant without an independent personality, who needs the guidance, protection and supervision of the father-official. A person has a tendency to be "child-like;" he or she is an infant who needs to be swaddled in feudal ethics, a person without "human desires," who can only lie in the cradle of ethics arranged for it by the father-official.

Traditional ethics stresses relationships between and among people, yet this is also the most dehumanized of ethics. As Lu Xun put it, the essence of such ethics is cannibalism. Furthermore, as the individual is being "eaten," he or she feels that this is what ought to be; it is "pre-destined;" it is "fate." Traditional ethics are even tied to sacrificial rituals and are thus sanctified, becoming religious in nature. Ethics becomes dogma, which the individual cannot but obey. There is only Heaven, only the master. The individual loses a subjective consciousness.

But the concept of the individual in Christian ethics is exactly the opposite, and it is precisely in its conception of the individual that Christian ethics differs from traditional Chinese ethics. It is the Christian belief that God created humankind and that each individual is made in the image of God. Humanity is the pinnacle of the universe. God and humanity have a kind of life continuity. As children of God, humans are equal before God. Every person has his or her dignity and worth which come from God. Christianity believes that each of us is sinful, but also that each of us has "a consciousness of God" (Schleiermacher). Though Christianity emphasizes God's omnipotence, it does not impose limits on human freedom in so doing. In fact, God's omnipotence encompasses human freedom. Christianity believes that humans are free before God, that each of us is a child of God with individual worth and subjective consciousness. God respects human freedom, will, emotion and independent human personality, but humans must take responsibility for the consequences of their free choices.

There is a strong emphasis on the relationship between God and humanity in Christian ethics, but great importance is also attached to relationships among people. Kierkegaard liked to use the story of Abraham's sacrifice of his son (Gen. 22) to illustrate the religious experience by which one moves from the ethical stage to the religious stage. This is the means by which, in terms of relationship to the Divine, the individual breaks through and transcends the ethical, but does not thereby offend against human ethical relationships. In Christ the Divine ethic and the human ethic are not in conflict with one another. Human ethics are frequently raised to a higher level because of the Divine ethic. Christianity sees individuals as sisters and brothers. The sanctity of the human personality may not be violated; the person is the end, not the means. People can serve each other, voluntarily acting as means or instruments, without losing sight of the "person as end" in the process. Since the individual is not an instrument, he or she naturally cannot be seen as a slave or used as a machine?

If one person treats another as a slave or as a draught animal, that person goes against moral law, insulting humanity and insulting God, as well as committing a sin. Therefore Jesus said: "...every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire" (Mt. 5:22). In fact, to insult others or call them fools is not such a terrible thing, it is like calling someone a "dummy," or "blockhead," but in Jesus' eyes to belittle a person, to insult them, was tantamount to murder, because this was to have no regard for human dignity. Persons are equal and free before God. There are no reverential or submissive relationships between persons. Quite the opposite, Christianity places even greater emphasis on love and care between persons: "for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn. 4:20). To love God means to love one's brother or sister. The heart of Christian ethics is love. There can only be love between God and humanity, and between persons, and human worth is squarely expressed in this loving and being loved.

## (2)

No one can exist in isolation, but must enter into a variety of relationships with other people. How to manage one's moral relationships with others is a task for ethics. From a superficial viewpoint, Chinese tradition lays a great deal of stress on ethics and morality, calling itself "a nation of decorum." Decorum and a sense of shame, loyalty, filial piety, moderation, righteousness and other such purviews of moral action are extremely well developed and can be found throughout Chinese philosophical works from Mencius to the Two Chungs and Zhu Xi (1130-1200). Rulers in successive dynasties have all wanted to strengthen moral consciousness, or to put it simply, to flaunt "filial piety" as their means of ruling the country. However, in Confucian moral philosophy the fundamental principles were "benevolence and forbearance." Confucianism might even be termed "a benevolent-forbearing ethics." Why benevolence? "Subjection of the self in service to rites is benevolence." Benevolence primarily requires subservience to or the rebuilding of the proprieties which safeguard ethics. The practitioner of benevolence must not only overcome the self and practice self-cultivation, but must at the same time benefit others through his virtue: he must establish his heart for heaven and earth, and establish the people's destiny. This promotes the recovery of rites as the goal and conversion to benevolence as a yardstick of the universe and of society.

In speaking of the highest good we must also speak of universal love. Confucius says: "A youth, when at home, should be filial, and abroad, respectful to his elders. He should be earnest and truthful. He should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the good." For the sake of benevolence one must not balk at sacrificing one's life: "The determined scholar and the man of virtue ... will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete." But how shall we pursue benevolence? The *Great Learning* says: "From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides." Cultivation of the self is the starting point for the way Confucianists conduct affairs. Self-cultivation requires profound knowledge of human relationships. In traditional Chinese culture, human relationships meant the five ethical relationships. According to



Mencius: between father and son there is affection; between ruler and subject there is righteousness; between husband and wife there is distance; and between youth and age there is order. At the same time, knowledge, benevolence and courage, the "three steps," should be used to strengthen the five relationships. Centered around benevolence, the knowledge of the benevolent one will be wisdom and his actions will be courageous. The central meaning of virtue is benevolence. By way of explanation, encounters between people can be described as the mutual response which arises when two people come into direct contact with one another. Benevolence is the most appropriate response in interpersonal exchanges.

There are no human relationships more intimate than those of the family. "Family life is the first sort of social life which Chinese experience." Thus benevolent behavior is first expressed within the family and then extended to society, the state and then to all under heaven. "Be affectionate to one's parents and thus humane to all people. Being humane to all people and thus loving all creatures... Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family so that elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with the kindness due to youth the young in your own family so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated.... When benevolence is practiced in the family, the nation will be benevolent; when forbearance is practiced in the family, it will be practiced in the nation." (*Mencius*) It is evident that when Confucianism speaks of benevolence, it begins with those closest to one and flows outward, from small to large, from near to far. Benevolence begins with the self and is extended to others.

Reciprocity has the same meaning as benevolence; it is nothing more than a way of expressing benevolence in the negative. Confucius said: "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you." Like benevolence, reciprocity begins with the self. The fundamental principle of Confucian ethical thinking may also be termed The Golden Rule. In fact it is nothing more than an expanded sympathetic consciousness as the basis for analogy. The *Great Learning* describes Confucius' Golden Rule thus:

"What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors, let him not display in the service of his superiors; what he hates in those who are before him, let him not therewith precede those who are behind him; what he hates in those who are behind him, let him not therewith follow those who are before him; what he hates to receive on the right, let him not bestow on the left; what he hates to receive on the left, let him not bestow on the right:-this is what is called 'The principles with which, as with a measuring square, to regulate one's conduct.' " (Legge)

In the Confucian view, rules of proper behavior are the key to "pacifying all under heaven" as well as the correct method for what is called equality among nations. "Equality" and "peace" inform each other; in modern parlance, "the rules are the measuring square for which the self is the norm," and "behavior" is measured against the norm of the self. This ethics of benevolent-reciprocity for which the "ego" is always the starting point and center, must classify and distinguish on the basis of near-far; intimate or not and shallow-deep. "Love which marks differences inevitably falls into narrow nationalism. It is incompatible with internationalism."<sup>4</sup> Based on such traditional thinking, such an ethical system will inevitably give rise to ideas such as "whoever is not of my own kind, must be of an alien mind," which closes persons off

from others and causes them to become those who do not dare to open up to the outside or absorb different things.

Centered around the ego and the clan, such an ethics which begins with the self and includes others by extension from that self, inevitably focuses its entire interest on "the self" and the "clan," and has great difficulty caring for the whole society. This is the selfish ethic of cultivating the self and regulating the family. A public or common ethic of showing care for the whole society, for engaging oneself in society is lacking. Thus it shapes personalities which lack concepts of fairness, public morality and law. This accumulated selfishness in the human personality is the origin in ethical terms of what creates filth, disorder and inadequacy in the social environment.

Liang Qichao (1873-1929) said that in China, over thousands of years, "all know of private morality, but know nothing of public virtue and lack 'a mass morality'."<sup>5</sup> "Everywhere are found those who satisfy themselves with personal goodness."<sup>6</sup> "Among those sitting in a public place, if there is one who speaks of national matters, others would stare and point at him saying: There's a madman; an idiot." Several thousand years of ethical education have brought about a perfunctory, apathetic national psyche. In his "On Immaturity", Liang Qichao sensed the immaturity of his people and through an analytical investigation of the infantile personality, offered a critique and advice: "Bias and selfishness are the nature of children. We sometimes hear of a child who is broad-minded, but that is rare. The usual attitude of the normal child is one of bias and his anger is aroused on the slightest provocation. A child is more selfish than an adult. If he has something in hand, it is dear to him and he will not easily surrender it." This is because children know only the self and not the other. The extreme form of individualism means that "citizens of an infantile nation know nothing but individualism." The type of individualism under discussion here is both selfish and centered on the personal. It is a type of personality most vividly and fully developed by Lu Xun in his story "Medicine" in the character of Hua Laoshuan-the blood of others can be taken as medicine. The familiar Chinese idiom "Sweep away only the snow at your own front door; give no thought to the frost on your neighbor's rooftop" is an expression of this selfish national psyche.

The benevolent gentleman of Confucian morality, kind to others and caring of creation, tolerant in his treatment of others, bears an unexpected and subtle relationship to the egotist who cares nothing for others, and it is this egoism that traditional ethical values secretly foster. The nation- and family-centeredness of traditional Chinese culture "can only lead to extreme egoism," since the individual is no more than a slave or tool vis a vis society. "When there is no right to freedom of any sort, it follows that there is no need to take responsibility for society."<sup>7</sup> The most important, the crucial category in traditional ethics is self-cultivation or the practice of individual moral virtue. This encompasses a whole host of principles to be cultivated, including probing a doctrine to the depths; regulating the heart, cultivating the self; governing the people. "Oneself" is the center and it is by passing through this center that relationships with the nation and all under heaven are derived. "Ceaseless self-cultivation arouses in people boundless interest in the "self" and the quest - for that self - of personal benefit."<sup>9</sup> Even so, traditional ethics has a plan for attaining the ideal personality of the Confucian gentleman. These gentlemen attach prime importance to "knowing the decrees of

Heaven": "One who does not know the decrees (of Heaven) cannot be a gentleman." Next in importance is self-cultivation: "it is honorable to cultivate the self." Third comes magnanimity: the "three things of which the superior man stands in awe," and the "nine things which are subjects with him of thoughtful consideration."

This plan for personality is always at odds with the real personality in the real world. Given good conditions, ethics can at most foster "personal goodness." In adverse conditions, it can only foster hypocrites who pay lip service to its tenets while acting immorally. Everyone speaks of morality, but no one has probed the depths of their own nature, and in fact everyone treats morality as something to wear or eat, a tool to serve their selfish desires. Moreover, in traditional culture, position and reputation are used to exhort and motivate people to "self-cultivation". "Overcoming the self," to "use the principle of individual welfare as motivation for the will is directly opposed to moral principles." Socially recognized honors, such as becoming a second-degree graduate, or having an honorific arch established to one's virtue ... bring benefit not only to oneself, but to one's clan. Why would anyone not avail themselves of it? "What methods can a society which does not rest on the affirmation of the rights of the people, nor on a whole and healthy system to protect people and improve their livelihood, employ to encourage self-denial among its people? If we set aside material benefit, it has no other means by which to come up with a model. But to offend the original intention of morality in this way means that not only does morality not help a person to do good, it leads him toward evil, towards the hypocrisy of egoism, towards unbridled egoism."

If traditional Chinese ethics are family-centered and exclusive, Christian ethics are God-centered and universal. Christianity believes that God's purpose is inclusive: "God loves all humanity in the same way that He loves a single individual" (Augustine). Therefore God requires that each person become an incarnation of and a partaker of love, loving not only God but all humankind, finally enabling all humanity to become a community of love. A person should not only care for him- or herself, but care even more for God's kingdom and God's justice and be one whose heart is filled with affection and concern for all people (1 Tim. 2:1). Such an ethic of love with God at its center, also emphasizes individual self-denial and obedience (Mk. 10:45).

Self-denial does not mean self-denigration, but the joining of one's individual life to all human life for the common good, in order to realize the most pure, most beautiful existence of the greater whole. The Gospel of John, chapter 14, verses 19-20 says: "I am in my Father and the Father in me." This is the highest fruit of self-denial. At the same time, Jesus demands that human beings not only deny themselves, but follow him (Lk. 9:23). This is a further step in bringing human life from self-denial into the midst of the most positive participation and seeking. Such participation and seeking is utterly different from the "good in itself" personality formed by traditional ethics. It contains a faith in the glorious side of human nature, and at the same time it carries a relatively great spirit of risk. What is meant by "obedience" is to take one's own vitality and extend it to others and to all humankind, to the enhancement of the common life, the common existence and the common glory toward the final realization of a collective life of eternal goodness. Christianity makes self-denial the most exalted means of bringing about life (Mk. 16:25). As the flower dies in order that the fruit may be formed, life is realized in the midst of self-denial, or in the fruit of self-denial and self-negation.<sup>12</sup>

Christianity requires that the individual not be ego-centered in ethical practice, but rather God-centered with the person as the goal or end. One cannot see others as means to an end on the basis of one's own proclivities. Nor does Christianity separate people into "us" and "them". In the Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke, Christ sees everyone as my neighbor, as objects of my love. And Jesus once said: If you gave a drink of water to one of these, you gave it to me (Mt. 25:41-46). In Jesus' eyes, to love each person is to love God; to slight a person is to slight God. Christianity requires: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). It is not the narrow or prejudiced, the selfish, not those concerned only for their own good, nor hypocrites which Christianity encourages; but rather broad-minded people concerned for others, for the whole society and for the fate of all humankind. This is why Paul said: "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren (meaning the Israelites)" (Rom. 9:2-3).

This kind of spirit, willing to brave hell for the sake of one's kin, for others, for the community, is precisely the persona Christian ethics forges. Christ said: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me," (Mt. 11:29). The yoke referred to here is the sense of responsibility for the salvation of humanity that Christ had; "learn from me" refers to Christ's self-sacrifice and obedience. From this we can see that in Christian ethics persons have a sense of responsibility: toward others, toward society, toward humankind. In all these areas a Christian has his or her unshirkable responsibility which must be exercised to the full. "Owe no one anything, except to love one another" (Rom. 13:8). This far surpasses the "do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you," sort of "indebtedness" and "sense of responsibility;" it far surpasses the "greater human spirit;" it is a spirit of self-sacrifice for the world and for creation. This is the meaning of human existence on earth in Christian ethics.

### (3)

We can say that the nucleus of ethical values in traditional Chinese culture is "the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues." These have been ontologized, absolutized, and sanctified as "heavenly principles" and have become objects of faith and worship for people in the belief that the meaning and worth of human life lie in respecting, maintaining and realizing these "heavenly principles." The three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues are the traditional moral code as well as its foundation, the guide to its search for values and its standard of evaluation. At the same time, such ethical values are closely tied to thinking on political authority. They also rely on the coercive power of the state for implementation. For this reason such an ethics has always propped up conservative social forces and the conservative spirit. Ethics such as this which rely on political force for their implementation have engendered in the Chinese people a disposition to authoritarianism, whose traits are strict adherence to convention; uncritical obedience to authority; belief in fate; a dual value system; identifying with those in power; etc. Such a disposition easily lends itself to smothering individuality and personal ability", while the internalization of traditional culture further reinforces the Chinese disposition to authoritarianism.

Linked externally to politics and internally to the process of moral education, traditional Chinese ethics can be epitomized by the phrase "inner sage; outer king." "Inner sage" represents the demands of traditional culture, particularly of Confucian doctrine with regard to the cultivation of the human personality. "Inner sage; outer king" implies that as long as one has become a sage through inner cultivation, one can put into practice "kingly" politics externally, or in society. This is the highest expression of the methodology and teleology of traditional Chinese ethics. In fact the basic demand of moral law is the conscious repudiation of self; traditional Chinese ethics, however, demands precisely the opposite: "inner sagehood can lead to outer kingliness;" to be a king thus becomes the highest latent impetus or goal of Chinese ethical cultivation. Humans find it difficult to renounce the self in order to respect moral law, thus traditional ethics has seldom fostered a true "sage" or a truly wise and able sovereign.

The *Great Learning* says:

"The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things."

To regulate the heart, to be sincere, and to extend one's knowledge to the utmost; these are all part of the individual's moral cultivation. This is due to the fact that all without exception can be subsumed under "moral principles" and to the realm of the external thus they come down to "the investigation of things," which actually transforms external norms into subjective inner demands, a process which is the same as cultivation; thus, "from the Son of Heaven down to the mass of people, all must consider the cultivation of the person is the root of everything besides." (*The Great Learning*; Legge) This is the inner sage.

The goal of self-cultivation is to regulate the family, rule the country and to bring peace to all under heaven. Ruling the country and bringing peace to all under heaven again belong to the realm of the political, that is the external king, and it is here that traditional Chinese ethics and politics converge. Though "morality" and "politics" belong to two different value systems, Confucianism aims to "politicize morals" or "moralize politics". This not only beautifies politics and equates politics with morality, it also makes morality dependent upon politics, deeming "moral" whatever is appropriate to political exigencies." As Prof. Cheng Zhongying has said, traditional Chinese ethical and moral views cannot be separated. Ethics is concerned with good and evil; morality with true and false. This causes Chinese to view it as their personal duty to see things in political terms, to see official service as their sole aspiration; this has also molded the Chinese veneration of power, sages, sovereigns and the powerful personality, and this has caused every realm of Chinese culture to be permeated by politics. People have no way to transcend the political.

In the traditional ethical system, people are not required to study ethics in order to gain some sort of knowledge, but to put the ethical system earnestly into practice, to make these the principles by which one lives. Emphasis on practicing what one preaches merely means that moral rules must be honored in moral practice. However, when Confucians speak of cultivation, regulation, rule, pacification - the whole process of self-cultivation, "the people and I are one ... heaven and man united," - the foundation upon which the realm of cultivation is founded is one in which human nature is all good. The profound theories of mind, nature, reason and breath, cannot be grasped by ordinary folk. It is not that it is beyond their capacity to accept or understand, but that their objective material conditions and anti-human content can in no way be squared with the facts." In the past, China always prided itself on being a "nation of decorum", as if the mystique of Confucianism were unlimited. In fact its power as far as prescriptive rules went all came from politics, from the coercive power of the state, and was not entirely due to self-regulation according to moral precepts. Actually, genuine moral action has its source in our will and good intentions; it does not arise from external pressures or coercion. Virtue is not the result of good, but the impetus to good. Kant says: "Nothing is absolutely good except the will to good." Yet in the "politicized virtue" and "moralized politics" of traditional Chinese ethics - an ethics which relies on political force to be put into practice - politics often guides the practice of virtue and shapes the moral and ethical individual. The human being has been politicized and has become an appendage or tool of politics.

The control exercised by Confucian ethical principles upon the individual is not limited to the domain of moral practice. The value of all of an individual's other actions is determined by it as well. It is precisely this type of nonspecific ethicization which is the primary reason why Confucianism was able to become the ruling feudal ideology. Traditional ethics are politicized ethics. Every kind of activity, from everyday life to society and politics has been ethicized; the practice of ethical relationships becomes the value, meaning and ultimate goal of human life. The ideal condition of society is virtue and harmony in which all social contradictions are reduced to subjective contradictions of ethical good and evil. "The value of all human behavior comes back to "clear principles" and "the whole nature" in terms of moral cultivation. Activities aimed at material production and material benefit can only be considered "reasonable" if the prerequisite correct social relationships are maintained. Anything which transcends this area is immoral, will be censured, and may even be punishable by law." An individual can only submit to (correct) ethical relationships and has no consciousness of the ego as subject. All individual emotional needs and creative impulses are seen as "evil" and must be suppressed through moral cultivation. An individual can only conform to nature and be in harmony with it. "A person's development follows his moral development which is based on a single-goal pattern of mind-body equilibrium and personality structure, and everything is measured according to this moral standard."<sup>17</sup> Human beings have been moralized and they have also become dependent on the development of morality. In traditional ethics, the whole and genuine individual has been lost.

Traditional Chinese ethics have ethicized secular powers, and have sanctified historical politicians. The consequence of ethicizing worldly power is to make citizens into nothing more than appendages of politics and those sages or enlightened rulers - citizens who are unconscious of their own human rights, will and freedom. Christianity believes that God is

transcendent; transcending politics, nation and ethnicity. God is God and the world is the world. But all humans are masterpieces of God's creation and all persons are equal before God. People do not depend upon or worship some worldly power, sage or ruler, but on God who transcends all these. A human being is not the chattel of any thing or other person. As Max Scheler put it: "Humanity is fleeing toward the impulse of God's love." God is the source and noumenon (thing in itself) of truth, goodness and beauty. Only if humans unremittently surrender themselves and are converted can they truly discover what it means to be human.

Christianity believes that within one people or one nation, each individual both depends on that people or nation and transcends it, as did Jesus who was both "Jesus the Galilean" and the "Cosmic Christ." He is King but his Kingdom is not of this world. The "God-image" or "God-consciousness" imparted by God is not limited in any way by the secular, just as the creative soul of an artist is not subject to material limitations. A human being cannot discard his or her own ethnicity or society, just as an artist cannot completely extricate him or herself from everyday life. But neither should a person be completely encumbered by society and ethnicity; each person should have a "watchtower" where he or she can transcend the self, ethnicity, even humanity. One should have an all-transcending metaphysical hope. At the same time, because human beings are constantly fleeing towards God, all a person's values center around God as the norm and not around some human or human norm. Of course, God is not some lifeless doctrinal concept. God is love, filled with vitality and creativity.

Christianity also emphasizes inner cultivation, similar to the concepts of "careful when alone" and "having no fault within oneself" of traditional Chinese ethics. Because the omniscient God examines the innermost heart of each person, Christian ethics also requires that people purify themselves and become saints; ... however, the goal of this inner cultivation in Christianity is not some potential benefit which may be derived. Faith is like the root of a tree, morals and ethics are the shoots, flowers or fruit; morality and ethics are not a result of external force or deterrents, nor of the prospect of material gain; it is rather the inevitable and natural crystallization of faith. Christianity does not posit the individual's inner desires, emotions, free will, creative impulse, ego realization, etc. as "human desires" which must be "extinguished", but rather requires that human beings deal with them properly. One is free to make use of all these things to move toward the embodiment of the true, the good and the beautiful. Of course, this movement toward God is not conditional on any material promise, but seeks final unity with God. "God is in me and I in God," in God I am made holy and perfect. As St. Augustine said: "It is only in you (God) that I have found myself." The individual is not submerged in ethics, but is within ethics while at the same time transcending ethical limitations by entering into the abundance of God, where human beings find their fulfillment.

#### (4)

The discussion of human nature in traditional Chinese culture regards the individual as capable of doing good and of perfection through instruction. "Everyone can be a Yao or a Shun" (legendary sage-kings). This has become the psychological basis of traditional Chinese ethical thinking, and has moreover to a very great extent determined the early maturation of

ancient Chinese moral cultivation. At the same time, this view furnished the basis for rule by morality and moral absolutism. Moralism in the theory of human nature and the emphasis on the function of moral politics has meant that traditional Chinese theories of moral cultivation and moral education are especially well developed.

The theory of the natural goodness of `man' (Mencius) says:

"What belongs by his nature to the superior man are benevolence, righteousness, propriety and knowledge." (*Mencius, VI.1*; Legge) "The feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence. The feeling of shame and dislike is the principle of righteousness. The feeling of modesty and complaisance is the principle of propriety. The feeling of approving and disapproving is the principle of knowledge. Men have these four principles just as they have their four limbs. Let them have complete development, and they will suffice to love and protect all within the four seas. Let them be denied that development, and they will not suffice for a man to serve his parents with." (II.1; Legge) "Benevolence is man's mind and righteousness is man's path. The great end of learning is nothing else but to seek for the lost mind." (VI.1; Legge)

These sayings of Mencius embrace three levels of meaning: an understanding of human nature that is basically good, with this goodness located in the human heart; methods for the realization of human nature: seeking the cause in oneself, strengthening the four fundamental principles of Confucianism; and the goal of learning: striving after goodness of heart and the recovery of human nature.

Due to the existence of the clan system and the dominant position in traditional Chinese ethical thought of Confucian orthodoxy, this moralistic view of human nature as basically good has become the predominant Chinese view. However, in spite of the fact that "nature is basically good," due to "human desires" goodness is often blocked thus the central emphasis in Confucian ethical cultivation is on "having few desires" and "elimination of desire." "To nourish the mind there is nothing better than to make the desires few. Here is a man whose desires are few: - in some things he may not be able to keep his heart, but they will be few. Here is a man whose desires are many: -- in some things he may be able to keep his heart but they will be few." (VII.2; Legge) "If it receive its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not grow. If it lose its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not decay away," thus "the great end of learning is nothing else but to seek for the lost mind." (VI. 1; Legge) Wang Yangming (1472-1529) also advocated "intuitive knowledge", believing that the key to moral cultivation lay in developing and strengthening one's inherent intuitive knowledge and ability. One had only to seek the cause in one's own heart and shortly self-realization would dawn, one would be well versed in moral principles and one could become a sage. Through giving full realization to one's mind, understanding one's nature, knowing heaven or being respectful and probing a doctrine to its depths, by restoring nature, one can achieve within oneself "union with heaven," that is "all things are already complete in us," being "in the same stream as heaven above and earth below."

Hence the person who is a product of traditional moral cultivation stresses "inner transcendence." This causes the person to have an excessively optimistic belief in him- or



herself, to lack a profound understanding of the dark side of human nature, and to lack that "sense of sin" stressed in Christianity. The result is that he or she also lacks that sense of rootlessness, that sense of being cast out into the wilderness, the anxiety of chancing upon nothingness, the tragic sense of bearing destruction. Due to excessive confidence in human life, such a person even lacks a balanced view of authority which is not conducive to the development of democracy or law. This type of moral cultivation with its emphasis on "inner transcendence", has made it very difficult for a Chinese to stand outside him- or herself when judging the self or others. Mencius says: "Benevolence is man's mind ... What belongs by his nature to the superior man are benevolence, righteousness, propriety and knowledge." Mencius establishes the subject ego as the paramount authority, esteeming the mind as absolute existence, and assuming morality as its inherent quality. Because of this, traditional moral cultivation, no matter whether theoretically or practically, has no need to revere an objective, external embodiment of morality, no need for God. This is just as Fichte has said: "absolute ego defers to no higher authority whatsoever, on the contrary, it always absolutely takes itself as the foundation, and is decided by itself."

This has also determined that what is given closest attention in traditional culture is man (sic) himself. The meaning of human existence in this world and transcendence itself is focused within. "My mind is the universe and the universe is my mind." (Wang Yangming) Consequently the world is contained within and to transform the inner self is to transform the world. It is very difficult for a human being to see either the individual self or the world clearly. A person always feels he or she can rely on his or her own strength to "be one with heaven and with the world." "Metaphysical" morality is expressed by means of a "metaphysical" implement. "Virtue" is contained within our lives, thus, "Man can glorify the truth; truth cannot glorify man." This will inevitably produce a negative result. Morality is expressed through an instrument, but often this expands the human without limits, until "metaphysical" morality cannot be perceived. This leads to a retirement of "metaphysical" morality, everything becomes too human-centered. "Humanity needs an orientation towards the divine, needs to foster curiosity along with a desire to initiate, cannot hibernate in the everyday things of this life. No human-centered culture is beneficial to the development of culture."

In the realm of ancient politics, those in power were seen as sons of heaven, they spoke of their will as the will of heaven, they "assisted heaven in implementing morality," they bent heaven to human purposes and any unreasonable results of their rule had to await a change of dynasty to be set right. The development of history was set upon a path of alternating cycles of "order" and "chaos", individual cultivation ran into problems, people indulged in empty talk of benevolence and righteousness, a few days' leisure spent in cultivation of the self were exaggerated as a condition of complete transparency. Only classical works of literature such as *The Scholars* have laid bare the hypocrisy of all this."

At the same time that Christianity emphasizes the transcendence of God, it also emphasizes the immanence of God. Karl Barth has posited God as "absolute other," in the belief that human beings cannot know God, nor achieve union with God by relying on their own strength, it is only through the revelation and salvific power of Jesus Christ that humans have the possibility of knowing God. Though God is immanent in the world, human beings'

"sinful nature" as a result of the fall has become an impenetrable obstacle to human reason. "thus human beings have no way to approach God. Human beings have "a consciousness of God," but also "sinful nature". We are unable to transcend ourselves. Christianity recognizes that human beings were originally able to "glorify the truth", but have lost this ability because of sin. Chinese traditional ethics advocates "self-strength" in achieving goodness, in gaining control over one's inner nature, in eliminating human desires, and obeying the principles of heaven. All this can only help the clever in being unconventional and arrogant. The not-so-clever will be unprepared and tend toward the dissolute. Kant put it: "You should, so you can." Actually in China this has changed into: "You should, but you cannot."

After the emphasis on "inner transcendence" in traditional ethics had been popularized, the system lost its reverence for the transcendent. There was no search for a transcendent God, and an understanding of the emptiness and awe-struck condition of human nature when God has withdrawn was lacking. "Poeticizing human life" inevitably produces the most superficial knowledge. The *Doctrine of the Mean* says: "What Heaven has conferred is called the nature; an accordance of this nature is called the path of duty; the regulation of this path is called instruction." (Ch. 1; Legge) Such a belief in natural goodness holds that by enhancing their natural goodness, humans can "rank with heaven and earth." This has caused Chinese to lack a consciousness of original sin and repentance. In fact one sign of a repentant conscience, is the expression of a sense of shame; repentance functions to arouse a person to an ego-lashing over his or her own conduct, and this ego-lashing function guides future conduct.

"The affirmation (on the part of traditional ethics) of reality also causes the premature formation of a meek personality which can never allow vigorous and full development of the spirit and which in the present world cannot initiate what in the ordinary course of events it ought to be able to initiate to achieve ever greater things." Christianity, however, does not concentrate the meaning of human life within the actual world. Christ said: "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn. 19:36). "Christianity has a kind of other-worldly feel about it."<sup>2</sup> Lu Xun pointed out that the path to national salvation for the Chinese people lies first of all in the establishment of the people. When the people are established everything else is raised. The concrete means to this is "respect for individuality and proclamation of the spirit."<sup>21</sup> And Chen Duxiu pointed out that "equal human rights before the law, independent moral personalities, the elimination of superstition in scholarship and freedom of thought are the fundamental reasons for the advanced state of European and American culture. ,<sup>22</sup> Thus, the crux of the regeneration of Chinese ethics lies in a healthy and whole development of personality, which will enable people to become truly human and to understand what being "human" means. It is here, perhaps, that Christian ethics has a message for us in China.

### Notes

1. Fei Xiaotong, *Rural China*.
2. See Liu Zaifu and Lin Gang, *The Individual as Delineated by Traditional Chinese Culture* (Hunan: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1988).

3. See T.C. Chao, *Christian Ethics*.
4. Huang Huajie, *Ethics: Christian and Chinese*.
5. Liang Qichao, *Public Morals*.
6. Ibid.
7. Liang Qichao, *On Patriotism*.
8. "What Leads People to Extreme Egoism," in *Journal of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, No. 140.
9. Liu and Lin, p. 70.
10. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*.
11. Liu and Lin, p. 76.
12. Huang Huajie, *Ethics: Christian and Chinese*.
13. Wei Zhengtong, *Chinese Culture and Modern Life*.
14. Tang Yijie, *On the "Inner Sage; Outer King" Theory in Chinese Culture*.
15. Bao Zunxin, *Confucian Theory and Four Little Dragons*.
16. Bao Zunxin.
17. Zhang Youliang, *Perspectives on the Development of the Modern Healthy Personality from Chinese and Western Patterns of Mind-Body Equilibrium*.
18. Liu Shuxian, *What Can Contemporary Confucians Learn from Christianity?*
19. *Chinese Culture and Chinese Philosophy*, Bk. 1.
20. Liu Shuxian.
21. Lu Xun, "On the refutation of Evil."
22. In *New Youth Magazine*, vol. 2, No. 4.

*Quotations from the James Legge translation of The Four Books are so noted.  
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Translated by Janice Wickeri.*

## 12. Summoning Personality and Spirit – Wang Weifan

Selfishness and corruption, cruelty and apathy have become virtually intractable maladies of our people.

A great people summons its fallen spirit; a great personality summons the fallen spirit of a people.

Y.T. Wu, an influential Christian social activist and church reformer, became a Christian in his youth precisely because of the summons of this great personality. He recalled the event in these terms:

"It was one spring evening thirty years ago (1917). I was in the home of an American friend, and read for the first time the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. Like a bolt of lightning, those three chapters seemed to shake me out of a dream. My eyes were opened and I saw a vision, I saw a great and noble personality: awesome and gentle, deep and penetrating. He took hold of my soul. He almost stopped me from breathing. When I returned home, I cried out for joy, moved to tears. I could not help confessing to this vision: "Lord, you are my Savior!"

Y.T. Wu was a social activist and a church reformer all his life and in these tasks he stood face to face with the great personality of Jesus, following Christ all his life with the same emotion expressed in the hymn "Grant good Lord, we serve Thee as we ought," by Ignatius Loyola.

However, assailed by the May Fourth (1919) and Anti-Christian movements (1927), Y.T. Wu, in the midst of his searching and dejection, devoted his efforts to drawing together Christianity and anti-religious social-scientific theory. This was decisive for his involvement in the democratic revolution and in the reform of the Chinese Church. In this, Y.T. Wu deserves to be called a forerunner of modern third world and political theologians. But one point he either missed or was beyond his energies: he was unable to bring that great personality which had summoned him to summon this dispirited people of ours.

It was, surprisingly, one of China's earliest Marxists, Chen Duxiu, who realized the need for this personality. In the February 1920 issue of *New Youth* magazine, Chen made the following proposals in an article entitled "Christianity and the Chinese People":

"We must foster in our blood the great and noble personality of Jesus, his deep and ardent feelings to save us from the abyss of cruelty, darkness and filth into which we have fallen. ...

"We need look no further than the impossibly high number of suicides to illustrate the apathy of Chinese society. One important reason for this is that the culture lacks feeling at its source. If we now want to remedy this fault, it seems we should take beauty and religion as our guides. Morality and justice divorced from feeling do not penetrate the inner being; knowledge divorced from feeling is one-sided, something learned, rather than innate. It is the guest, not

the host, it is the machine or the charcoal, not the steam and the fire. The passions of beauty and religion purify and permeate our inner lives. It is for this reason that I propose the fostering of the great and noble personality of Jesus, of his deep and ardent feelings in our blood."

Chen Duxiu felt that "what Jesus can teach our personalities and emotions" is "the noble spirit of sacrifice ... the great spirit of forbearance...the equality of the spirit of universal love;" and further that this "is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity ... such a fundamental doctrine scientists have never damaged and never will."

What Chen Duxiu saw here was what Western culture with its source in Christianity could bring to augment traditional Chinese culture, a "blood transfusion" in which insensitive, cruel and dark Chinese society would receive the great, noble personality and deep ardent emotion it stood in need of; an "injection" of the noble spirit of sacrifice, the great spirit of forbearance, and the equality of universal love which an enfeebled, fallen people must have.

But when the May Fourth Movement raised its battle-cry, it seemed that little notice of Chen's proposal had been taken. All hope for the salvation of China was placed in Western science, technology and the democratic system, ignoring the deeper, more central aspect of the spirit of Western culture, the noble and great personality, and the ardent, profound emotional side. In this way, the May Fourth Movement which began the new democratic revolution, from its very beginning, lacked one "Mr." At the same time that it was raising the banners of "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science", it was overlooking "the noble personality", a banner that was even more important for Chinese culture and society.

The theologian T.C. Chao made this incisive critique of the May Fourth Movement:

"The old morality was cast aside, and with it the spirit of the old morality. Loyalty, filial piety, chastity, righteousness and other moral behavior were overturned by a retrograde evolutionism. Even what lay behind these virtues - willpower, determination, struggle, tears, ardor - have all fallen into disuse.

"To put it simply, the new thinking has gained our demand for emancipation in life, but has not given us a unified constructive force. It has realized our demand to make a new estimate of all value(s), but has not given us a stable basis for life and peace of mind ... we have the work of liberation, but no sanctions for construction; we have our individual demands, but no common standards or foundation. The new thinking in China has as yet contributed nothing to the construction of a moral life."

On this basis, T.C. Chao felt that "The greatest scourge of the Chinese people is the Chinese people themselves." Therefore what was needed was "psychological construction" or a rebuilding of the spirit," otherwise "China is finished!" And the fundamentals of psychological construction in Chinese society or a rebuilding of the spirit lay in allowing the religious life force of Christianity to "invade Chinese culture, bringing it new blood and new life." Facing a falleness of spirit, corruption of personality and sinfulness of society, T.C. Chao pointed out:

"Christianity is revolutionary. But its revolutionary method is to enable those who do not love others to undergo a transformation so as to love others. The Christian revolution is a revolution aimed at the release of all inner bonds, at degeneration of the spirit, corruption of the personality, and the sinfulness of society. Its revolutionary methods are religion, making an effort to love, and sincere sacrifice, for only this can bring people new life."<sup>3</sup>

"Christianity has no political party or organization or participatory methods; it does not give us an educational plan, an economic system, or scientific and philosophical discoveries and theories. ...Its unique contribution is Christ and the unique religious experience of Christ."<sup>4</sup>

In the autumn of his nation's peril, faced with total outbreak of the war of resistance against Japan, Wu Leichuan's heartfelt concern for the nation was "the people's future resurgence." He saw the hope for the people's resurgence in "a healthy and whole personality capable of assuming heavy responsibilities." As for the "implementation of ancient politics and custom and etiquette in society" of traditional Chinese culture, Wu felt that "certainly we can no longer follow old habits today." The only thing that should be carried on was the "cultivation of the personality" of the ancient sages, and what Christianity had to contribute to the resurgence of the Chinese people was "its ability to generate the leaders that are needed today," namely those who would model themselves on Jesus in the reform of society.'

Wu Leichuan placed the ancient Chinese sages on a par with the Christian Jesus, each having a common great personality. This was a position somewhat similar to that of the early T.C. Chao, who also termed both Jesus and the sages "sons of Heaven" (meaning sons of God). Such a theological view led him into a difficult spot: If the great personalities of the ancient Chinese sages can resuscitate our people, why must we seek help from the Western religion of Jesus? Quite a few researchers working on the integration of Christianity and Chinese culture who came after Wu Leichuan and T.C. Chao often seized upon the Confucian concept of "Heaven" (*Tian*) with great relish as being identical to the Christian concept of "God", or Laozi's "Dao" (*Tao*) as the Christian "logos" and so on. In terms of the comparative study of religion, these people painted themselves into a corner without realizing it.

One of those who found his way out of this difficulty fairly early on was Xu Baoqian. In *Yang Ming and Jesus* he wrote:

"There is one fundamental difference between Yang Ming and Jesus and it centers on the so-called question of self-power vs. other-power ...All mortals are sinners. If they desire salvation, they must rely on a power which transcends nature and humanity. Humanity's inability to save itself is just our inability to raise ourselves through our own power."

The later T.C. Chao had lived through the rape of his people during the Sino-Japanese War, and his theology was something of a sigh of regret:

"Liberal theology, full of confidence in the human ability to save itself from selfishness, is fast crumbling... Humanism and scientific naturalism are insufficiently able to stimulate the human moral spirit to come to terms with social issues."

"As civilization grows more advanced, humanity grows more undisciplined. It can assault heaven single-handedly, but it cannot overcome itself. 'Man (sic) can act on behalf of Heaven,' but humanity is itself in the abyss. Humanity can control what is external to itself, but not what is within. Humanity can overcome the material world, but cannot master its own heart."

Xu Baoqian and the later T.C. Chao were basically attempting to explain two points: that neither of the two banners raised by May Fourth - "democracy" with its origins in Western humanism and "science" with its origins in Western naturalism - were able to stimulate the moral spirit of the Chinese people, or to solve the problems of Chinese society. Mortals do not have the strength to save themselves and others from selfishness, nor to save themselves through "knowledge" or "their own efforts" according to the cultivation of the personality in Chinese tradition. Humanity must have an outside source of strength, one which transcends nature and humankind, to order the inner self and control the heart. This outside source of strength can only come from the salvation of Jesus Christ. Thus, at the conclusion of his *Christianity Explained* published after the Sino-Japanese War, T.C. Chao issued this appeal:

"The way of salvation for humankind can only come through the voluntary action of God, coming down from above, through the revelation of the word become flesh and the granting of grace. Within autonomous human rule, there must be a transcendent rule in which it finds its true life.

"Jesus Christ is the way of salvation. The whole of the way of salvation holds the complete revelation of Jesus Christ, his life and death, words and actions, his ministry and his pure unsullied, unblemished personality. But in all this there is a peak of perfection, that is his death on the cross.

"O World, turn your head, look at the cross high among the clouds!" 8

But, the world has not yet turned its head, society has not yet looked back, humankind has not sought that bestowal of heavenly grace from on high, nor has it taken notice of the salvation and summons of that great personality upon the cross. Even the Christian Church which takes the cross as its standard has turned its back upon the cross and the great personality who was nailed to it.

In the late 40s and early 50s a reform movement began brewing in the Chinese Church. It was mainly Y.T. Wu and T.C. Chao who elaborated the necessity of this movement in theoretical and theological terms. Y.T. Wu's emphasis lay in the recovery of independent decision-making powers for the Chinese Church and for the recovery of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. T.C. Chao emphasized inner repentance and remolding of the personality for the Christian leadership. Perhaps these are two sides of the same issue which no reform movement can avoid: one is a reform of external organization and concepts; the other reform of the inner heart and personality. Reform of the internal without reform of the external is not sufficient to break through the shackles and bonds of the old order and concepts; external reform without inner reform is not sufficient to resist the long accumulation of filth associated with corruption and social deterioration. A reformation needs reformers, and reformers need to have a great personality.

Thus T.C. Chao's painful cry:

"To reform the Church we must transform those in responsible positions within the Church; we must transform their thinking, their style of work, their very hearts.

"If the leaders do not take the initiative to reform their own hearts, then there is no way for the Chinese Church to reform.

"People cannot save themselves, only God in Christ can release humankind from the fetters of sin. ...Shouldn't those of us who believe in Jesus Christ, who gaze upon the Lord who sacrificed himself on the cross to redeem us, repent out of a deep sense of remorse? As we stand under the cross, do we still want to protect our own power? ... If we would reform the Church, shouldn't we first, out of a deeply felt sense of piety and with loathing (for ourselves) reform ourselves?"

Though many theological and doctrinal explanations can be given, the reform movement in the Chinese Christian Church subsequently became essentially a political movement. T.C. Chao's voice was overwhelmed, and the summons of the personality grew more and more distant and more and more dim. The early fifties, just after the establishment of the People's Republic, were a time when the atmosphere in society was at its best, and when affirmation and praise for the people's character and strength was at its strongest. At this time, the society was no longer listening to and no longer seemed to need the summons of an external and transcendent great personality.

The Cultural Revolution and the society which emerged from the ten years of turmoil made people painfully aware that our people and our society were still in need of that noble sacrificial spirit, that great spirit of forbearance and the equality of universal love which Chen Duxiu had identified in 1920. There was still a need in the blood of our people and society for the noble and great personality of Jesus, for his deep and ardent emotions. Indifference and apathy, selfishness and greed, corruption and stupidity, political trickery and maneuvering: are these not the same old intractable maladies of the Chinese people which T.C. Chao saw? Neither moral education nor enlightened guidance is able to save the situation. Is not this the situation Wu Leiquan saw, which humankind could not save itself from, for which humankind needed a strength outside itself?

The nonagenarian Me Fuya, on the basis of his comparative studies of Western culture, developed in the 1980s a "new humanism", which is a Christian form of humanism:

"Christian humanism or humanist Christianity implies that through the personality and motivation of Jesus Christ, through his spirit of love and sacrifice, the innate moral concepts of the Chinese people can be strengthened, deepened and raised to new heights...

"The innate Chinese humanism needs the new blood of the light and warmth of the personality of Jesus Christ, to create a new humanism. "<sup>10</sup>



To foster a Christ-like personality, ordinary secular education will not do. In Xie's view, "the content of secular education is no more than intellectual training with no spiritual formation and the methods of secular education are but external refinement without any mutual interaction." The reason the religion of Jesus Christ is loftier and more profound than secular education lies in its two great capabilities for molding the personality which are unavailable to secular education: one is the profoundest form of mysticism or "mystery"; the other the broadest "salvific grace" or "salvation."

Mysticism or the mystery of religion cannot be compared to or approximated by ordinary art or aesthetics. Xie has made the following distinction between the two:

"Indeed, though art and religion are both open to the realm of the transcendent, the aesthetic sense can only enable the small ego to be submerged in the superego of the universe and attain a temperament of forgetting both the self and material things. In religion, once the soul of the individual self and the universe have been assimilated into one, it is inevitable that one will even more quickly and completely escape from the cares and troubles of the world, and save the multitude of one's compatriots. And this is what Jesus Christ made so very clear to his disciples and the crowds when he was on earth."

This not only points up the distinction between religion and aesthetic education, but even more, reveals the true meaning of the "mystery of religion" along with its relation to "salvific grace" or "salvation"; namely that the inner and outer are congruous: "whoever has an increasingly profound and thorough mystery, the vitality of his or her service must grow increasingly white hot. Conversely, whenever the capability of service becomes nobler and more extensive, it must be because its mystery burns with a pure blue flame." An individual "can, through self-cultivation, achieve communication with the soul of the cosmos and even become one with it; in this way, the support of this unparalleled greatness emboldens the whole person. One could go through fire and water. One is willing to leap into the world to save countless people."

The once popular slogan "serve the people" has already faded from the people's memory, and among some young people it is virtually a joke. One of the reasons for this is that the slogan had become a feeble sermon, a useful deception to oneself and others on the lips of a tiny minority who use their privileges for their own benefit. But an even deeper reason lies in the fact that this slogan did not transcend the ethical strata of traditional Chinese culture, and it lacked an intrinsic motive force. Xie Fuya has this to say:

"The heart of religion is white-hot, it is bound to be "self-sacrificing" ... Those with religious faith give themselves to the soul of the cosmos, forgetting the self or ego. Naturally there is not a hint of selfishness or self-interest here ... for nature is already breathing in time with the cosmos, everything secular is completely forgotten - reputation, profit, power, even the senses - nothing is possessed by the self. This is what in religious philosophy is termed 'standing aloof from worldly concerns.' However, this renunciation of the world is not negative or nihilist, but rather positive to the point of wanting to leap into the sea of troubles to save the multitude. I believe that the power and vitality of "serve the people" must spring from such a source before it will be pure and unsurpassed."

Serving the people requires a vital source, those who serve the people need to be moved and impelled by a kind of great personal namely the inspiration of Christ's personality.

The art critic Li Jiachun wrote in 1987:

"It is exactly these conscious or unconscious thoughts and feelings about the era, about the universal weakening of the spirit of the people, which has led some of our new artists to seek and find within the close attention to human destiny of Christian culture(s) "an element of counterpoint in the spirit of the self.""

Here, we can almost hear a voice, and it is not only that of the new artists. A great people is still summoning its lost spirit, a great personality is still summoning a people which has lost its spirit.

### Notes

1. Y.T. Wu, "Christianity and Materialism: Confession of Christian," in *Daxue Monthly* (July, 1947).

2. T.C. Chao, *The Future of Christianity in China*.

3. Chao, *Citizens of the Kingdom*.

4. Chao, *Christianity Amidst the Storm*.

5. Wu Leichuan, *Christianity and Chinese Culture*.

6. Chao, *Christianity and the National Crisis*.

7. Chao, *Christianity Explained: On Salvation* (March, 1947)

8. *Christianity Explained: Christianity and the World*.

9. Chao, *The Chinese Christian Church's Path to Reform a Church Reform Under the Judgment of God*.

10. Xie Fuya, "Christianized Humanism," in *Xie Fuya's Later Collected Writings on Christian Thought*.

11. "Genesis and the Theory of Evolution," *Collected Writings*.

12. "My Response to 'The Spirituality of Atheists,'" *Collected Writings*.

13. *Ibid*.

14. Li Jiachun, "The Art of Ding Fang." in *China Art Journal*, No. 38 (1987).

*From The Nanjing Theological Review, No. 10 (June, 1989), p. 78.*  
*Translated by Philip and Janice Wickeri.*

### **13. Knowing the Lord's Will – Ji Jianhong**

Eph.5:17; 1:19; Mt.7:21

#### **It is necessary to know God's will**

Before we were saved by God's grace, we followed our own counsel in everything we did. We served ourselves, seeking only our own pleasure, our own advantage. But having become believers, we are people who received the Savior Jesus Christ, people bought back by the Lord for a heavy price. We are people who belong to the Lord, so we ought to be determined to serve God. Therefore, we need to go through a basic change: Whatever we do, we can no longer pursue our own pleasure, nor our own benefit. Instead, we need to follow God's will, to act according to his intentions. We are no longer the center of our own lives, but the Lord Jesus Christ is now the center of our lives. Matthew 26:39 teaches us what the guiding principle of all our actions should be: "Lord, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Being saved through faith and having entered this new life, we have within us the fundamental urge to live according to God's will. If we act on our own intentions, we will suffer and will feel neither happiness nor peace. Only if we act upon the urgings of that inner life and follow God's will, will we be filled with joy and peace, and our inner life will be enriched. To follow the Lord's will is a path full of joy and peace, a path on which we will encounter blessing, a path that will increase in us the life of Jesus. Therefore, everyone who believes in the Lord, from the very first day should learn to understand, receive and follow God's will, so that God's will governs everything we do.

We need to know that a Christian who does not understand and follow God's will cannot possibly glorify God. The greatest happiness for us Christians is to receive God's revelation, to know God's will and then act accordingly.

The things that we attend to before God are the work of life, spiritual service. To serve spiritually, it is most important to understand God's plan. If we do not understand God's plan, then we cannot possibly do God's work. God needs people, but the people he needs must suit his intentions. To suit his intentions it is necessary to be a person who understands his will and acts accordingly. Such persons are the only ones that God can make use of. Often, we are only concerned with our own needs and neglect God's needs. Of course, God joyfully gives us everything we need, but he does not want us to seek our own contentment in selfish, egotistic desire. We ought to realize that fulfilling God's needs is the greatest need that we Christians have.

Brothers and Sisters, if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). The Spirit's constant work is to reveal and glorify Christ. If the Spirit leads us to such an extent that "we only know the Lord, but not ourselves," then we are blessed. Jesus will become everything to us, and we will be able to enter into his fullness, and we will receive all kinds of heavenly, spiritual happiness.

## How to know God's will

The problem is how we can know God's will. Some say God's will is too mysterious, and for somebody to understand God's will is easier said than done. But thanks and praise be to God: It is not only that we human beings want to know God's will, God himself wants his sons and daughters to follow it. He teaches us: "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). We human beings can know the mystery of God's will, because this was his own purpose which he set forth (Eph. 1:9). Therefore, it is God's task to make his will clear to us. It is his responsibility to tell us his intention. But then, how does God make his will clear to us? There are three main ways in which God reveals his way to people.

### (1) The inner guidance of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:14 reads. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." And in John 14:17 we read: "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you." We all are God's sons and daughters, we have God's life, so God often makes use of his Spirit in us to talk to us, to guide us. We are people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, therefore God's will can be shown to us from the depths through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things" (Jn. 14:26). Therefore, we must learn to trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit in us. Brothers and Sisters, God can, at the proper time, show us an inner light, give us a feeling, make clear to us what comes from God and what does not.

But for some people this never happens. Why is that? This is because some people do not understand the special characteristics of the Spirit. If we do understand them, we will be able to grasp the work of the Holy Spirit and we will not be led astray. The Spirit has two characteristics that all of us believers should understand. The first characteristic of the Spirit, as is clearly stated in the Bible, is the character of the myrtle tree. This is a small, low shrub, not as tall as a cypress whose roots are shallower than those of the oak. In short, it is a tree that does not strike the eye, but it is evergreen and beautiful, sending forth a strong fragrance. That is to say, it is willing to remain hidden, not playing itself up. Therefore, an arrogant, self-centered person cannot obtain knowledge of the guiding work of the Holy Spirit. "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). The other characteristic of the Spirit is that of the morning star. We know that the stars shine all the time whether it is day or night. But we cannot always see their light. On very clear nights we can look up and see a sky full of stars. But if we wait till the night is ending, just before dawn, the stars will disappear one after the other in the bright light. We can hardly see traces of the starlight for the sunlight and other sources of light. What is so difficult about us human beings is just that the life of our own "self" is too active. Only when we are not disturbed by feelings, thoughts and wishes, only when we rid ourselves of selfish ideas, personal considerations and egoism, only at these times, when there are no other lights outside to disturb us, can we become completely quiet. Then we can slowly return to the depths, and from the depths we can see the "starlight," we can receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There is a brother who, before he became a believer, loved to play cards. Sometimes he would play so long that he did not realize whether it was day or night. Later he became a believer and was saved. He is not very literate, so he cannot read the Bible very well. One day, some of his friends had dragged him into a game. He was already sitting down to play when he suddenly felt uneasy. He asked his wife: "Can Christians play cards?" His wife did not know how to answer him, so he asked her to get him his Bible. But even with the Bible in his hands he still did not know what to do. The other players said to him: "Don't bother, let's just play two hands." This brother did sit down again, but the seat seemed to be full of needles. He could not remain seated. He was disturbed, but unable to put it in words. Feeling unwell without being able to say why, in the end he left the table and the game. Afterwards, somebody asked him why he had not played. He answered: "There is a power within me that I cannot describe that would not let me play." The "power that cannot be described" this brother is talking about is nothing other than the Holy Spirit. When somebody believes in God, then the Holy Spirit will dwell in him, guide him and be his Lord. Brothers and Sisters, can you see? God tells us his will through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

There are two kinds of guidance by the Holy Spirit. One kind is an inner urge, like in the story of Philip evangelizing the Ethiopian (Acts 8). There was this powerful Ethiopian on the road, returning from Jerusalem, who was in his carriage reading the book of Isaiah. Then the Spirit told Philip: "Go up and join this chariot." And Acts 10 tells us that while Peter was still thinking about his vision, the Spirit told him: "Three men are looking for you, rise and go down, and accompany them." These things were the result of the inner urge. The second type of guidance is the inner obstruction. Acts 16:6-7 says "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them." This was the inner obstruction, and this brother's "inner power that cannot be described" that prevented him from playing cards was the same type of thing.

When we want to be clear about God's will, we need to understand what this "feeling" deep in our hearts is all about. God's Spirit dwells in the deepest part of every person, so the "feeling" the Spirit causes is not superficial, it is not from the outside, but comes from the deepest depths. God's Spirit in us tells us what is God's will and what is not. The life of God is in us, and if we are able to follow the needs of this life in every matter, we will feel that we are in the right. But if we go against this life even slightly, we will feel bad and we will not be at peace. Therefore, every Christian should live by following the needs of God's life in them.

What must be stressed is that while we are seeking God's will, we should absolutely never let ourselves be led to go against reason. Hebrews 5:14 says: "(They) have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil." Therefore, we need to train our thoughts and wills. We must let go of our own ideas, but to negate the rational character of our faculties of thought and will is unacceptable. It is an even greater mistake to think that one need not use one's own head if one relies on God. As we know from Luke 1:3, when Luke wrote his Gospel it was after "careful consideration" and "with settled thoughts." The apostle

Paul tells us in Romans 12:2 that only if we are transformed by the renewal of (our) "mind" we may be able to "prove" what God's will is. Therefore, if we are seeking the Lord's will, we should use our minds. Of course, our minds should rely on the work of the Holy Spirit, otherwise renewal will not make any sense.

## (2) The revelation of God's will in the teaching of the Bible

Brothers and Sisters, God does not only use the guidance of the Holy Spirit within us to reveal his will, he also makes use of the teachings of the Bible to make his will clear to us.

God's will never changes. The people of ancient times experienced a lot of events in which they saw God's own will manifest, and they put them all down in writing in the Bible. Therefore, many principles and examples of God's will are recorded there. And if somebody wants to understand God's will, he or she just needs to read the Bible, and it will become clear, bit by bit. We just have to see what guidance God's word gave in the past, then we will know what God's purpose is today. Brothers and Sisters, God's will for us will never be contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

Psalms 119:105 tells us: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Therefore, if we want to know God's will, if we want to know how he is leading us on the road forward, we just have to read the Bible more often, to memorize as many biblical passages as possible. We should study the Bible carefully.

There are two ways in which God speaks to us through the Bible: One way is the Bible's teaching on principles, the other is the Bible's response. What does "the Bible's response" mean? For example, when we spend a lot of time in prayer before the Lord, when we ask him to speak to us, one day the Holy Spirit may, in a powerful way, place any sentence or chapter or verse of the Bible into our minds. This is the answer that the Bible gives us.

We have to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand the teaching on principles in the Bible. To gain a response from the Bible, we also have to rely on guidance from the Holy Spirit. For example, as we know from Matthew 28:19-20, the Holy Spirit tells us that Christians should spread the Gospel to everyone. This is the Bible's teaching on this principle. But if we want to spread the Gospel at a certain time and place, is this act according to God's plan or not? We have to decide this relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this way we can know whether it is the will of God.

Some Christians use superstitious divination-like ways to seek God's will. They set the Bible before them and pray: "Oh God, guide my hand so that whatever verse it points to clearly expresses your will." After they have prayed, they keep their eyes closed and open the Bible and point to a place on the page. Then they open their eyes to look, and take that verse as God's will. Brothers and Sisters, this is an extremely mistaken method. Not only does it not work, it is also exceedingly dangerous. Please remember, everyone of you, that we are already people who have received God's life, and that God's Holy Spirit already lives in us. We ought to ask God to use his Holy Spirit to instruct us. Therefore, we should read our Bible daily, study and

memorize it. This way we allow the Holy Spirit, at the necessary time, to use our memory of what we have read there to guide us.

### (3) External revelation of God's mysterious will in circumstances

God does not only guide people through the Holy Spirit within them. Neither does he only speak to people through the teachings of the Bible. To make his will known to people, God also makes use of our surroundings, revealing his mysterious will through external things. We know from Exodus 16:10 that as "Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked towards the wilderness, and behold, the glory of God appeared in the cloud." Let us note that the glory of God is manifest in a cloud. The exodus road of the Israelites was extremely hard and difficult, but, praise be to God, "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night." The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night never left the Israelites. Brothers and Sisters, can you see? This is God using the external surroundings to enlighten the Israelites, to lead them on their road forward. I John 2:27 says: "The anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you, as his anointing teaches you in everything that happens and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him." Brothers and Sisters, we have all received this anointing and now it remains in us. But. Brothers and Sisters, take note: where does the lesson of the anointing come from? How does it guide us? God's anointing teaches us in everything that happens. Can you see? In everything that happens! He teaches us through the outer circumstances. If we only follow the teaching of this anointing in everything, we can live in the Lord. Thank the Lord, this is so marvelous!

There are basically three aspects to what we have called circumstances or external surroundings. First of all: God reveals his will and intentions through the development of human history. God is the master of the universe, he is at work in history. The process of historical development is the process in which God puts his plan into practice. Therefore, we have to learn to understand his plan by looking at the process of historical development. Secondly: God makes his plan known to us through common sense. In our everyday lives, we strive to act according to common sense, and our God definitely does not deny human knowledge. God wants us to use our common sense wherever it is sufficient. The third aspect is the ordering of circumstances and it is this aspect we want to take a closer look at today. For example: You feel an inner urge to go somewhere to spread the gospel. To spread the gospel - that corresponds with the basic teaching of the Bible. But where will you go? Have you had an invitation from anywhere? This is an essential condition. If God has prepared things for you, if he has ordered the circumstances, and if you receive an invitation from that place - this proves that God has revealed his will through the ordering of the circumstances. But if you receive no invitation from this place, that means conditions are not yet right. God has not yet arranged things for you in those circumstances, so you need to wait before God.

But among us believers, there are some who doubt this. They think that God will not bother about these things, that he cannot be in charge of such specifics. Brothers and Sisters, such a view is wrong. God does bother about big affairs and about small things. He is in charge of the principles as well as the specifics.



Luke 12:6 says: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?" And Matthew 10:29 reads: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall on the ground without your father's will." This shows us clearly that whatever happens has to be allowed by the Father. It is very difficult to count a person's hair, but the Lord says in Matthew 10:30: "The hairs of your head are all numbered." Nothing that happens to us is accidental, there is no difficult experience that God has not measured. The things we face daily all carry within them God's arrangement, they are all moved by God's hand. Brothers and Sisters, if we still have not learned to accept guidance by the Spirit, if we do not quite understand the teachings of the Bible, we should at least be able to see God's hand in the circumstances of our lives.

If we want to know whether our feelings are the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must clarify two questions: First, whether your feelings correspond with the teaching of the Bible, and second, whether the circumstances are right or not. If your feelings do not correspond with the teaching of the Bible, they are wrong, and of course they are not God's will. If the circumstances are not yet right, it is necessary to wait. Maybe our feelings are wrong, maybe God's time has not come yet. This means: When we want to determine whether something is according to God's plan or not, we first have to look at the teaching of the Bible, whether there is any guidance given towards this matter in God's word. Afterwards we can ask ourselves again how we feel about this matter. Circumstances, the teaching of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit have to point in the same direction. If one of the three is missing something is not right. In this way you can see how God makes his will clear through the ordering of circumstances. If it is not God's will, not even a sparrow falls to the ground. But if it is God's will, God will surely make the Holy Spirit's guidance, the teaching of the Bible and the circumstances point in the same direction. If our feelings are clear, if the teaching of the Bible is clear and the circumstances too, then the will of God will also be clear to us.

In the Old Testament, God uses many visions and dreams to tell people his will. In the New Testament, there are also visions and dreams, but God by no means uses them as his main method to guide people. The distinguishing feature of the New Testament is that God lives in us human beings and can speak to us directly from within. Thus normally God speaks to us through inner guidance, the teaching of the Bible and circumstances of our lives. In the New Testament, visions and dreams are the exception, not the common method God uses to guide us.

For example, as Acts 10 shows us, God wants Peter to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles. But Peter was a Jew and his prejudices sat deep-he had never had any contact with Gentiles. God wants to turn Peter away from his prejudice, and therefore sends him a vision. But - please let us take note! - at the same time God also orders the circumstances of Peter's life: Cornelius sends three men to seek Peter, and at the same time the Holy Spirit talks to him (Acts 10:17-18). Only when the Holy Spirit's guidance and the right circumstances go together we can grasp God's will. Therefore, even if we have seen visions and dreams, we still need to seek inner guidance and the right circumstances. There is a small number of Christians who say that they have visions and dreams so often that it simply becomes a common occurrence. Brothers and sisters, please note: This is false. At the least it shows a

kind of abnormal mental state. But it may also be an attack by Satan, or this person may be confused by false spirits. This is definitely not a normal phenomenon.

We have spoken of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the teaching of the Bible and the ordering of circumstances. Here we have arranged them in order from one to three, but this does not necessarily happen in real life. Sometimes the arranging of circumstances comes first, and later the guidance of the Spirit and the teaching of the Bible. But at other times the guidance of the Spirit and the teaching of the Bible come first, and only after some time of waiting are the circumstances right, too. In short, God has many ways to give us guidance. Different persons are at different stages of holiness, their needs before God are different, and God's way of guiding different people is not always the same either. But the usual ways, those that are most important, are through the guidance of the Spirit within people, through the teaching of the Bible and through circumstantial arrangements. I want to stress it again: Only if all those three point clearly towards one direction do we have considerable certainty about God's will.

### **The right person must go with the right method**

We now know the three methods for seeking to know God's will, but not everybody is able to know it. Please notice that not only the method, but the person also needs to be right before things will work out. Even though the method may be completely right, if the person is not, it is of no use at all. This is even more true if somebody turns away from God's presence. The problem of people really is their attitude towards God, where their heart is. But what is the right attitude? What should be the normal condition of somebody before God? According to the teaching of the Bible and to our own experience, we should pay attention to four aspects:

#### **(I) We need to be determined to follow God's plan**

If we want to know God's will, to begin with, we should pray from our heart: "Oh God, I want to follow your will." John 7:17 says: "If any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God, or whether I am speaking from my own authority." That is to say, God will only make his will known to those people who are ready to follow it.

Therefore if we really want to know God's will, besides having the right methods mentioned above, we also need to be resolved to follow God's will. It is necessary to have a "resolution" before God. A person who is not determined to follow God's will is unable to understand it. Therefore, whether we will be able to know God's will depends on our "resolution" before God. "Resolution" does not mean a simple wish, even less a vow that is just spoken but not meant sincerely. In contrast, it means a kind of offering, that we completely give ourselves to God. As Romans 12:1 puts it: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

If we are fervently and wholeheartedly willing to follow God's will, he surely will help us to understand it. His mysterious plan will certainly become clear to us. God tells us in 2

Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to mightily help those whose heart is blameless toward him."

(2) It is necessary to master "proving"

Romans 12:2 says: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect." Brothers and Sisters, in our spiritual experience, "proving" is an indispensable lesson. Somebody who cannot "prove" cannot possibly know God's will. Therefore, people who cannot prove are really confused, their minds are in the dark, they cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil. We have to see that in reply to God's will we need not just be a person of heart and determination, a person that sacrifices him- or herself, but we also need to be a person that is able to "prove." If we want to "prove," we need to be "transformed by the renewal of the mind." If our mind is not transformed, not renewed, then we will not reach our goal of "proving."

(3) It is necessary to "delight"

Psalms 40:8 says: "I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy law is within my heart." To delight or not to delight is a crucial, a basic decision - it is a decision about directions. It is a matter of feeling, of the "heart." Very often it is not that we could not understand God's will, or that God would not make his will clear to us; it is that we do not delight in doing God's will. Not to delight means to sever oneself from God, and if we are separated from God, the door of God's will is certainly closed to us.

(4) In everything that is good, God equips us that we may do his will

Hebrews 13:21 says: "In everything that is good he equips you that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ..." Brothers and Sisters, we only need to do more good deeds, then God will equip us to do his will. If we are able to do good deeds, we can, from those good deeds, clearly comprehend God's will. If we only do more good deeds, God will, through our "doing more," develop in us a character that delights in doing what he says. What are good deeds? As God puts it in 1 Corinthians 10:24: "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor."

Brothers and Sisters, we should under no circumstances think that knowing and following God's will is a small affair. It does matter greatly, so much that it is connected to the whole of God's plan. I hope that you, Brothers and Sisters, will clearly understand that knowing and following God's will is a glorious responsibility. Therefore, let us study to know God's will, let us study to follow God's will. May God help us.

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Translated by Claudia Wahriseh-Oblau.*

## **14. How to Lead People to Christ – Kong Xiangjian**

There are two aspects to the problems investigated in this article. One is how to lead to Christ people who have yet to believe in him. Secondly, there is a fairly sizeable number of persons who have already joined the Church but in fact, do not really know the Lord. How does one lead them to be Christian, both in name and in fact? Both questions are discussed below.

### **Basic Christian Responsibility**

Proclaiming the gospel and leading people to Christ are the mission of the holy Church, and the Christian's basic responsibility. Firstly, because before his Ascension, the Risen Lord told his disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved: but those who do not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:15,16). This is not only a call and commandment given by Jesus to the disciples of his time, but to believers of succeeding generations. Therefore, every brother and sister who follows the Way of Christ should respond joyfully.

Secondly, on the night of the Savior's birth, the angel announced to the shepherds: "Be not afraid, for behold I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people" (Lk. 2:10). That Angel of Glad Tidings clearly declared to humankind that God's saving grace is not limited to any particular nation or people, but will come to all the people. As St. Paul said: "And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near..." Therefore, Christians who truly understand the Lord's will, cannot be satisfied with their own individual salvation. Rather they will want all persons to repent.

Thirdly, those holy believers who have been truly born again, experienced repentance of sin, freeing of the soul, a dying of the old self, and as new persons have embarked upon a new spiritual journey, must feel deep in their hearts a burden, namely, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). Because "If I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission" (I Cor. 9:17).

From this we can see it is perfectly natural and non-offensive for a truly saved Christian, a Christian who truly understands the Lord's will, who truly wants to follow the Lord's way, to earnestly spread the gospel and joyfully lead people to Christ. However, when we face the real situation in the Church, especially the rural Church, the matter of leading people to Christ does not remotely resemble the Biblical example. A brief analysis will easily show the seriousness of the problem.

### **Two Current Deviations**

I. The blind leading the blind - a fairly common situation. In leading people to Christ, there is one cardinal rule, the leader should know the way. Otherwise it becomes "If a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a pit" (Mt. 15:14).

During the past decade, adhering to the implementation of religious policy, the rural Church has been continuously developing, with the number of believers increasing daily. Rural and small town Christians now constitute over 80% of the total number of Christians in China. These sheep all rely upon the efforts of committed lay volunteers to shepherd them.

On the one hand volunteers are busy with their own production work, and on the other, they are busy shepherding Church members. They have little training or opportunity for advanced studies. Time does not permit. Because of this their ability to nurture believers and manage Church affairs is not too great.

Some volunteers have devoted themselves to preaching but have not themselves been baptized. They have no conversion experience and do not even understand the basic teachings of Christianity. It is believers nurtured by these co-workers who, as they go out to lead people to Christ, become increasingly confused the older they grow, but at the same time the more enthusiastic in their work. This is because they have retired early from frontline production, are cared for by their children and have sufficient time to do "holy work". Added to this is their urgent sense of growing old and wanting to harvest more "fruit" in their remaining years.

Consequently the sharp increase in the number of believers experienced by rural churches has snow-balled. But this kind of flourishing is sometimes only superficial. True seedlings are few. Once, in a volunteer workers training class, I asked a number of students if they were able to speak cogently about conversion. The number was exceedingly small. Hardly anyone could speak about their own conversion. From this analogy we can glimpse something of the quality of rural Church membership.

II. One-sided witness causes the rural Church to deviate from the correct path. Browsing through some local "Three-Self" statistics on believers and some membership lists of meeting points, I found that among reasons given "for joining the Church," over 95% indicated "because of illness," or "bedevilment." The number of normal, healthy persons who professed faith was miniscule.

In talking directly with believers and asking why they believe in Christ, nearly 100% replied, because of "illness," or "calamity." The "gospel" these brothers and sisters proclaim is supported by the view, "only believe in Jesus and all illnesses will be cured; trust in the Lord and all will be well." What they preach is a "Gospel of Serenity." What people believe is a religion of comfort. They know nothing about the basic tenets of faith like confession and repentance, new life and salvation, casting off the old self, putting on Christ, Christ died for me, or I'll live for Christ.

In their hearts they have replaced Jesus Christ with the bodhisattva Guanyin to protect them from harm, a Daoist god to exorcise evil spirits and the legendary healer Hua Tuo to restore health. A small number of persons go so far as to chant incantations and use talismans and spiritual dances to exorcise and heal people and attain their goal of "leading people to Christ." But in fact this produces the opposite results. This kind of lop-sided fanaticism of healing and exorcism only causes Christ's Church to daily deviate from the correct path and tread an evil way. What can we do'? Let us seek God's revelation from Scripture.

## **How to Lead People to Christ**

There are various ways to lead people to Christ. The Apostle Paul summarized it this way, "I have become all things to all persons, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). At the same time Paul says no matter what the listeners' interests or hobbies, there is but one core to the gospel, namely, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:22-23). It is only with a clear understanding of the heart of the gospel that one can truly lead people to Christ. This is the prerequisite for all methods of witness. It must never be forgotten.

Let us, in what follows, reap the benefits to be found in reviewing the record of how the gospel was spread and people were led to Christ during Jesus' time on earth and during the era of the Apostolic Church.

### **A. Make an honest witness (Jn. 10:40-42)**

Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist, faithfully carried out his own duties. He unflinchingly said, "I am not the Christ, not Elijah, also not the prophet Elijah," and also, "Even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." He also publicly declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:19-29). "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

John sternly rebuked the Pharisees, exhorting them to "Bear fruit that befits repentance..." (Mt. 3:8). From the gospel account of John the Baptist's life, we can note several unique features: 1) he never performed any miracles; 2) he refused to proclaim himself; 3) he raised high Jesus Christ; and 4) he proclaimed a gospel of repentance.

It was this honest witness and sincere rebuke that made many Jews think about this "trail-blazer". "They said: 'John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man (Jesus) was true.' And many believed in him there" (Jn. 10:41,42).

### **B. Have favor with all the people (Acts 2:43-47)**

During the Apostolic Era, the content of the gospel proclaimed by the disciples included a recounting of their own personal experiences, testifying to Jesus' resurrection from the dead, exhorting people to repent and believe in the Lord and steering them away from a crooked generation (Acts 2). At the same time, owing to needs stemming from communal living, there was implemented "All things in common, and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:44-47).

The preceding scripture passage reveals for us at least three points regarding "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47): 1) The need to lift

high the Risen Christ and exhort people to repent and believe in the Lord; 2) The need for a unified Church; and 3) The need to have favor with all the people.

These three points are terribly important. Think about it for a moment. How can a Church lead people to Christ if it is detested'?

#### C. Strengthen the whole organization (Acts 6:1-7)

Support for a communal Church during the Apostolic Era did not last very long. Truthfully speaking, trying to cater to so many differing views and interests created much conflict. "Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution" (Acts 6:1).

The disciples quickly realized that unless Church affairs and general affairs were separated, the building up of the Church would be hampered. And so from among the disciples they chose Stephen and seven others to handle general affairs. This enabled the disciples to concentrate on praying and spreading the word. From this clear division of labor, the organization was strengthened, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

#### D. Walk in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31)

The early Church grew under many forms of persecution. The number of believers was very unstable and when persecution came, the disciples dispersed and the Church disintegrated. As Jesus reminded his disciples, "You will all fall away; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered'" (Mk 14:27). On the other hand, when the Church experiences a stable social environment, even though short-lived, it can also be beneficial to the Church's spreading the gospel and attracting people to the work of leading others to Christ.

Acts 9 vividly recounts the series of events relating to God disciplining and choosing Saul, Saul's ceasing active persecution of the Church and how from that time the Church experienced less persecution. Scripture tells us, "So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

This passage tells us two things. Any Church that wants to lead people to Christ: 1) must have a relatively stable social environment; and 2) must itself fear the Lord in all things and receive the comfort of the Holy Spirit. You cannot have one without the other.

#### E. Develop a good example (Acts 11: 22-24)

The Church is comprised of believers. The Church's witness carried on by them. Its mission is accomplished through members and its total witness is the sum total of individual witnesses. If not by separate individuals and one-by-one examples of the apostles, the Church cannot become a light unto the world.

It is empty talk to speak of the Church's responsibility to Christ and society as a whole, but lack a response to the basic needs of individual believers. Such an approach is mere superficiality.

When news of the Church in Antioch reached Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to make an on-the-spot investigation. When Barnabas arrived he saw God had greatly blessed the Church at Antioch. He was pleased and exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose (Acts 11:23). As a result, "Barnabas was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord" (Acts 11:24).

From this we can see that a very important step for today's Church in leading people to Christ includes raising the quality of believers and developing useful models to lead people on the path to Christ.

#### F. Observe regulations together (Acts 16:4-5)

In 49 A.D. a conference was called in Jerusalem to discuss the basic question of whether or not Gentile Christians had to observe Jewish law. The results were of one accord. In addition to "Abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled..." (Acts 15:29) and deciding not to further trouble the Gentiles, the conference appointed Judas and Silas with a letter of introduction, to accompany Paul as messengers to the Gentile Church to stop "itinerant preachers" from confusing people. As they made their way from city to city, they passed on for observance decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

History has already proven that minimizing confusion, strengthening organization, enacting rules and observing regulations together, all help to strengthen the Church and successfully lead people to Christ. I believe we should follow this example.

#### An Additional Required Lesson

The above discussion, "How to lead people to Christ," is directed towards the vast numbers of persons who have not yet professed Christ. As for those who already believe in the Lord in name, but in fact do not know him, this additional lesson is given.

Is it not a bit odd for someone to believe that accepting Christ comes first and evangelism second? This seems a bit abnormal, like putting the cart before the horse. The problem is how to face the facts while at the same time resolve objective realities. This additional lesson is especially important for the rural Church. What can we do to make up for deficiencies? This is what we should do:

First re-educate volunteers. No matter whether long or short-tenor training courses, the course design must include the Catechism booklet. The focus should be on the two chapters "Salvation" and "The Church." In fact, many volunteers have discovered while taking these make-up classes that they began to understand the mysteries of salvation and thoroughly



repented and confessed their sins, and could in turn enable the same thing to happen with those they serve.

Second, hold Inquirers Classes. Each year before holding baptismal services, we all arrange classes in various meeting points to assist those requesting baptism. We still use the Catechism as the basic text to systematically instruct and enable the students to more fully understand basic Christian doctrine. If in examining students we find no clear evidence of their having been born again, then we should not pass them. It would be far better to limit the number of students than to approve the wrong ones.

Third, fully observe the Lord's Day (or the Sabbath). From this pulpit I have repeatedly proclaimed Christ, held high his crucifixion, and preached the gospel to large numbers of believers. Many times after the service, I've had people say to me, "I've been coming to this church for many years. This is the first time I've heard such truth." Also people say that from now on they want do their best to seek the truth and not remain "beginners" forever.

Fourth, observe proper order and gradual progress. When increasing numbers of believers become more deeply rooted in the gospel, we should meet their growing spiritual needs accordingly. At this time these teachings, "Bear fruit that befits repentance" (Mt. 3:8); "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples; if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35); "Godliness with brotherly affection, and sisterly affection with love. It is more blessed to give than to receive" (2 Pet. 1:7; Acts 20:35); will help nourish the spiritual life of believers, build up the Church and become the central message.

Now we firmly believe the make-up classes enable a close spiritual tie between both listener and hearer. We are drawn together like living water flowing from a spring and will praise Christ's boundless love.

The Church in China, to be more exact, the rural Church in China stands on two thresholds. One is the vast number of persons outside the Church. One is the so-called believers inside the Church. Which is more important? Where lies our priority? From this writer's personal experience, I firmly believe it is better to "take root below and bear fruit above," than to build a skyscraper on sand (Is. 37:31).

We should first improve the course and then increase the number of students. This way we can guarantee the most qualified people to develop the Church. Also, this is the only way we can build our Church "Upon the rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the Church, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock" (Mt. 7:24-25).

This is how to attain our sacred task of widely spreading the gospel and leading people to Christ.

From The Syllabus, No. 3 (1989), p. 46.  
Translated by *Ewing W. Carroll, Jr.*

## 15. Is it Wrong to Get Rich? – Kong Xiangjian

Text: Prov. 13:4, 11; Mt. 19:29; Luke 18:29-30; Mt. 6:33; Eph. 6:2.

God has called me to serve a church in a small and isolated county seat, where I am also in charge of the ministry of the churches throughout the county. I meet frequently with fellow Christians and co-workers from other towns and rural areas, and am always encountering certain concrete issues, one of which I'd like to discuss here.

One midwinter's day, the first clear day after a light snowfall, Brother Ma came in from the suburbs to see me. He got straight to the matter at hand: was it a sign of too great a love for the things of this world to work to become prosperous? He is a pious believer, a Christian who loves the church; at the same time, he is a clever farmer, good at whatever he puts his hand to, who raises livestock and does fish-farming as a sideline. He has been commended by relevant government departments a number of times, but within the church opinions of him vary, ranging from praise to suspicion to condemnation. This seemed to me a very practical as well as a fairly universal problem. It would be better to have an open discussion and pool the wisdom of the masses, rather than let everyone come to his or her own conclusion. Accordingly, on Sunday afternoon I invited the several church members named below to take part in a discussion which turned out to be very enthusiastic as well as helpful.

*Conveyor:* Everyone knows Brother Ma. Since the re-opening of our church, he has been very busy on the church's behalf, giving himself enthusiastically to the task and happily donating money. Furthermore, because he applies scientific methods in his farming, he has had a lot of success creating wealth, and has been cited and given awards for his ability to turn a profit many times. But within our church, opinions of him vary. Some praise him, some are opposed to him, some harbor suspicions of him. There are also quite a few among the young and middle-aged members who would like to learn from his example, but cannot make up their minds. Today we invite everyone, on the basis of what the Bible teaches, to pool their experience, take into account the realities of our society and discuss their views on the issue.

*Brother Kung:* (Age 70; a Christian for forty some years and a highly respected elder brother.) I've heard a lot of the discussion about Brother Ma. As for me, I'm an old Christian meeting up with a new problem here and I don't know what would be best. According to what's written in the Bible, Jesus made it quite clear: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth .... but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven,...For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:19-21). And again: "No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:24). And Jesus criticized the rich by saying it was harder for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle (Mt. 19:23-24). He also compared the rich to Lazarus in order to criticize the rich who loved the world too well (Luke 16:19-31). I have leaned on the Lord for more than forty years and these Biblical teachings have often reminded me that I cannot give in to greed in the face of riches. It is better to be poor than to sin. So for a while I was anxious for Brother Ma, prayed secretly for him, and asked the Lord to protect him. Later when I saw how he used the fruits of his labors to do much that helped people and gave glory to God - once he gave six hundred yuan for the church

building, and has given lots of money without making a big fuss about it to help the needy, all good things - I felt he was on the right track. But then how should what the Bible says be understood? I don't have the answer yet.

*Brother Xu:* (In his twenties; became a Christian with his parents and has worked at home since graduating from junior high school. Very enthusiastic, an honest fellow and a member of the choir.) In my opinion money is no good; too much of it can be dangerous. When my father was working he once had a lot of trouble over money. Now he's retired, he's always warning my older brother and me, "whatever you do don't think about money all the time or you'll confuse right and wrong." I'll be honest with you, when the Church chose me to head the "self-support" committee for sideline production, the reason I was always trying to resign is because I was afraid of being tainted by money and have it affect my love for the Lord.

*Sister Zhou:* (In her thirties; from a Christian family of farmers. An elementary school graduate and extremely enthusiastic member of the church council.) I think Brother Xu is right. There's a young guy in our village that everybody calls "Zhang Er" - he was an enquirer. Two years ago he was involved in some "company" with some outsider, and was frequently away. I don't know where they got the capital, but whatever you wanted, be it fertilizer, lumber, cement, or pesticides, they could get a hold of it. I watched him go astray, day by day. He had a cigarette in his mouth all day long - good quality, too - he was often drunk, and he'd gamble, high stakes every time. The villagers said the fertilizer he was selling was bogus and the pesticides past the expiry date. His parents, worried, would tell people: "Our second son no longer has the Lord in his heart, he just has money on the brain, please pray for him, ask the Lord to save him."

*Brother Lei:* (In his thirties. A junior middle school graduate, farmer and carpenter; very interested in all kinds of production. He and his wife are Christians and very pious ones.) Everybody knows that I've registered with the provincial authorities to grow and sell edible mushrooms. I'm not here to defend myself, but I've always felt that the Church over-emphasizes the life to come and ignores reality. The traditional idea of poverty as honorable which doesn't allow one to dare to become rich, seems to have a Biblical basis, yet it's not completely in line with what the Bible says. I've pondered those verses Uncle Kang quoted too, and I think they have something to say. But at the same time, I've thought about three people we find in the Old Testament. Abraham was the father of the chosen people Israel, a righteous man and a friend of Yahweh, but at the same time he was a rich man who had "much gold, silver and livestock" (Gen. 13:2, 24:34-35). In his times, Job was "blameless and upright,... feared God, and turned away from evil." At the same time, he had a lot of property, "seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses and very many servants" (Job 1:1-3). After he had been tested, he was blessed many times over by God (Job 42:12). And Ruth's husband Boaz was a very wealthy man (Ruth 2:1). He was a good man, blessed by God, who became the great-grandfather of King David, which makes him an ancestor of Jesus Christ, word become flesh. Why can't we, relying on the gate of God, be wealthy people who are pleasing to God?

*Grandma Xiang:* (In her sixties. Became a Christian as a young girl, was widowed in middle-age and did not remarry. In the handicraft business in the county seat. A pious

Christian in charge of women's work in the church.) I'm uneducated and have a difficult time reading the Bible. I've been a Christian for several decades. I only know how to be a Christian saved by grace. The ten commandments must be kept; we must not covet any wealth that is not justly gained. The wealth God has given me, he has not given me for sinful purposes, but to do good with. I follow the Lord's instruction: "(make every effort to supplement) godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love" (2 Pet. 1:7). What I get through my labors, I should use to help those in the church and outside it. When I do this my soul is at peace. God continues to bless me and I become more prosperous with each passing year.

*Brother Su:* (Fortyish. A senior middle school graduate raised as a Christian by his parents. In business for himself growing vegetables in the suburbs; the responsible person in a home gathering related to the county church. Participated in a municipal-level lay training course.) Thanks be to God, I have gradually become prosperous in the last three years. My average family income this year is over eight hundred yuan. We are getting ready to build a three-bedroom house. As to the question of whether there is a contradiction between making money and spirituality, I wasn't sure in the past either. On the one hand I wanted to respond to the government's call to work hard and get rich, but at the same time I was afraid it would affect my progress in my spiritual life, and I couldn't decide what to do.

In 1985, I attended the lay training course run by the municipal offices of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. During a class on how to answer difficult questions raised by the Bible, old Rev. Hong lanced the boil in my thinking. He said: In Matthew 6, Jesus twice speaks of riches. The traditional explanation of this in the Church has been to emphasize the negative aspect of earthly treasure, but this ignores two phrases and a condition in these two passages. One phrase is "for yourselves", meaning that you cannot accumulate earthly treasures for your own selfish ends (Mt. 6:19). The other phrase is "to serve" meaning worship. To serve mammon is to worship money, to make an idol of money; that of course is unacceptable (Mt. 6:24). But at the end of this chapter, the Lord gives his disciples a promise with a condition attached, that is, ..."seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (condition) and all these things (the material things of life) shall be yours as well (promise)" (Mt. 6:33). The more God's kingdom and God's righteousness are among us, the richer humanity will become. Everyone will have what they need and so will we. Here Jesus is opposed to the goal of self-interest, but encourages putting others first, putting the collective before the individual. It's not a wholesale negation of seeking after present life. The Lord made a promise to those who follow him: "...there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:29-30). Not only this, but God has promised those who honor their fathers and mothers that they will be blessed with long life. This is the only commandment with a promise attached. These "blessings" naturally include the blessings of material life. Jesus has never told us to separate ourselves from the world or to look down on reality. He has only asked the Father to keep us from the evil one (Jn. 17:15).

What's more, the Bible has never affirmed the lazy who don't work yet receive something, but tells people to "never flag in zeal" (Rom. 12:11). Titus 3:14 can also be translated in this way: "Tell our people to learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent

need, and not to be unfruitful." And the author of the Book of Proverbs warns people time and again: "The soul of the sluggard craves, and gets nothing; while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied." And again: "Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but he who gathers little by little will increase it" (Prov. 13:4,11). Therefore, for the glory of God and to benefit people, we should do more good deeds and witness to the Lord's name. If we work hard we will prosper; if we keep the law we will prosper, if we help others we will prosper. This is in accordance with God's will. It does not go against God's guidance; it is beneficial to the self-support of the church; responds to the call of the government and should be fully affirmed and encouraged. Old Rev. Hong's explanation dispelled my doubts and in the last three years I have been progressing carefree and happy along the road to riches.

*Brother Ma:* (and everyone echoes him) Well spoken. You've attended the lay training course, after all. We wish you'd told us all this earlier!

*Convener:* (well satisfied) It's been a good discussion, much more comprehensive than I could have done by myself. Let me sum up what you've said: (1) To work hard and get rich is substantially different from an excessive love for the world. The two cannot be lumped together. (2) The Lord accused unjust rich people, but blessed those who were "blameless and upright; feared God and kept away from evil," those who were glad to help others. (3) The impetus to making money should not simply be for oneself. We cannot worship money as an idol. Our purpose should to benefit everyone, for the glory of God and the benefit of humankind. This is the inevitable result of first seeking God's kingdom and God's righteousness. (4) There are at least three kinds of significance for Christians seeking prosperity, these are: to benefit the nation, church and family; to give glory to God; to benefit oneself and to benefit others. Just as long as I carefully follow the Lord's teachings, uphold the law and work hard in getting rich, not only will I benefit the four modernizations, but what I do will be pleasing to God and a good thing welcomed by the people!

As your minister, I have been used to "getting my portion of grain at the appointed time," giving individual answers to questions and, limiting my pastoral methods to "feeding the sheep." Today, I'm grateful to all of you for the lesson you've taught me. To use a popular phrase, in pastoral work, we must also develop "horizontal links!" (laughter) and that is the traditional method of the church too, called "communion in the spirit, mutual support." And we must apply this method more in the future. Now, let us pray, thanking our gracious God for guidance and blessings.

*From The Syllabus, No.4 (1988), p. 35.  
Translated by Janice Wickeri.*

## 16. The Grace to Discern Spirits – Kong Xiangjian

Text: 1 Cor. 12:10; 1 John 4:13

In 1st Corinthians, chapters 12-14, St. Paul spends a lot of time on a detailed description of problems connected with spiritual gifts. First he points out that when the Holy Spirit apportions gifts in accordance with his will, the persons receiving them should not be puffed up with self-pride because of them. He uses the phrase "the most excellent way" to emphasize that love is the greatest gift. He clearly exhorts us not to go to extremes in seeking the gift of speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:5). Rather we should earnestly desire the gift of prophecy because this gift can build up the Church and lead people to the Lord (1 Cor. 14:1-4; 12:24-5). In Paul's list of the spiritual gifts, there is one which seems not to have warranted sufficient attention in the Church of later ages. That gift is the "grace of distinguishing between spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10). Taking our present day Chinese Church into account, especially the Church in the countryside, I feel that we must earnestly seek this gift and understand its meaning.

### 1. Let us begin with a discussion of prophets and prophesying.

The Israelites of the Old Testament held prophets in high regard. They considered them to be representatives of God. "Prophets" were called "seers" then, as 1 Samuel 9:9 tells us: "In former times in Israel, anyone who went to consult God used to say, 'Come, let us go to the seer.' For he who is now called prophet was formerly called seer."

The word prophecy means both "pouring forth words" and "preaching." Most of the prophets of the Old Testament received revelations directly from God; they also received the gift of knowledge and the power to preach from God. By extension, prophet can also mean "the Lord's messenger" or "God's spokesman." The call, inspiration and mission of all true prophets cannot be separated from the work of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was preaching his message many people called him a prophet, and he himself acknowledged this title (Lk. 7:16, 24:19, 13:33). In the time of the Apostolic Church some of the disciples who were full of the Holy Spirit were also called prophets. Names such as Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manahen and Saul (i.e., Paul) appear in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 13:1). Moreover, in Paul's letters "prophesying" was listed among those gifts of the spirit we should strive after (1 Cor. 14:1,39). However, after the year 120 A.D. it seems that the name prophet for an official position in the Church fell into disuse. Nevertheless, the gift of "prophesying" is still necessary for "the building up of the Church" and for leading people to the Lord (1 Cor. 14:4-5; 24-25).

Even in Old Testament times there was a distinction made between true and false prophets. Some false prophets were used by God to test the chosen people with false signs and fake divinations (Deut. 13:1-3). All these actions were opposed by God (Ezek. 13:8-16). When the nation of Israel was vanquished and taken into captivity or scattered to many places, when they were in the midst of the abyss of suffering and earnestly seeking deliverance, then especially would false prophets of every stripe appear, rashly invoking God's name. They issued false prophecies which deceived the chosen people and led them astray. Thus the Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount repeatedly admonished his listeners: "Beware of false prophets" (Mt.

7:15-23). In his epistles the Apostle Peter also warned the people about false prophets saying, "False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1 ). The Apostle John also wrote: "Do not believe every spirit" (1 Jn. 4:1).

All false prophets possess practically the same common characteristics. They make use of false signs and lies, of divination and sorcery, to cheat and confuse people. Actually we know that "ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made; so they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). Everyone who reverently worships Yahweh does not look for strange signs, dreams or wonders because through a consideration of the whole of God's creation in the universe, they can arrive at a knowledge of God's existence and power at any time. And the Word of God revealed to us in history through the holy apostles and prophets, namely, the Bible, always guides us like "a lamp for our feet and a light to our path" (Ps. 119:105). This is especially true in the time after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit has descended upon his Church; the divine Counselor is always with us On. 14:16). The "spirit of wisdom and revelation" is always at work in our hearts, helping us to know the true God (Eph. 1:17). Therefore, today's self-proclaimed prophets, those persons who rashly invoke the Lord's name, should all the more arouse our attention and put us on our guard. This is a special concern at this time when our Chinese Church is just getting back on its feet, and when more and more people are daily turning to the Lord. We have the problem of the sheep being many, but the shepherds few, even to the point of some flocks lacking any shepherd at all. This is especially the case of the Church in the countryside; many flocks are without shepherds. Because there is no one to pastor the flock, the spiritual life of the sheep is weak and immature. Hungry sheep can easily be unselective about the nourishment given them. Because of this situation, false prophets have an empty space to fill, an advantage to take. They mix absurd theories and falsehoods into the Lord's teachings and lead the flock astray. This an urgent problem which cannot be overlooked.

## II. A Brief Exploration of the Distinction between True and False Prophets and the Discernment of Spirits.

How can one know whether a prophet is true or false, and how does one distinguish between spirits? First, we must seek the grace of the Holy Spirit to help us see clearly the difference between truth and falsity. At the same time we must devoutly read and understand the Bible, using the Bible's teachings as the basis for distinguishing between truth and falsity, and for discerning spirits. Grace is a gift which each person receives before the face of God; it is a gift distributed to each one by that Holy Spirit who moves wherever he wills. Grace can be obtained, but it cannot be demanded. Below, based on the Bible the writer shares his small grace in discussing the difference between truth and falsity.

(1) A false prophet must have outer garb; otherwise he could not be a false prophet (cf. Mt. 7:15). They "outwardly wear sheep's clothing" and "disguise themselves as angels of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). But inwardly they are ravenous wolves. They "make a pretense of religion, but deny its real power... They make their way into households and capture weak women" (2 Tim.

3:5-6). False prophets are able to deceive people through the use of this outer garb. Therefore, we must absolutely be on our guard, lest we be taken in by this false outward appearance.

(2) False prophets also quote the Scriptures, but for the most part they are very selective. This is just like the Lord's wicked tempter. They like to quote passages out of context, citing a certain point but neglecting the rest (cf. Mt. 4:1-10). We know that the truth of the Bible is not one-sided and that it absolutely should not be quoted out of context. The word of God is to be handled justly (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). So we must be especially careful. As soon as we hear someone say, "It is recorded in the Scriptures that...", do not immediately think that it is the Lord's voice speaking. We must first see along which path the speaker wants to lead us. If he wants to take us up to the roof of the temple to cast ourselves down as a proof of our sincerity, then this is a temptation from the evil one. We must absolutely not listen to such things.

(3) They rashly invoke the Lord's name (cf. Mt. 7:15-23). False prophets not only disguise themselves as angels of light and quote the Bible, but for their own individual benefit they rashly call upon the Lord's name. They preach in the Lord's name, cast out devils in the Lord's name, and display extraordinary powers in the Lord's name, they even style themselves as the "true Lord" or a "living Jesus"- all for the purpose of deceiving the masses. Thus they defile the Lord's name. God knows their crime and will certainly punish such people (cf. Ex. 2(1:7; Deut. 5:11).

(4) They do not follow the correct path (cf. Jn. 10:1). The Lord said, "He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber." Nowadays we have so-called "independent evangelists." All day long they are involved in dishonest practices. They have no job and do not work, but they scurry about hither and yon, scrounging a meal here, cheating someone out of money there, all for the purpose of satisfying their own selfish desires and pleasures. They hide themselves away during the day, and only become active at night. They avoid public places, rather holding their meetings in the wilderness. The places are secret and their activities sinister. "Hating the light, they have loved the darkness." Purely and simply their actions are those of thieves and robbers.

(5) They put themselves on a pedestal (cf. Mt. 4:1-10; 1 Tim. 6:3-4). The first words Our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount were: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for the kingdom of God is theirs." He also said, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Mt. 23:12). Preachers are the servants of God because Jesus himself was the servant-model for all the saints of the Church (cf. Rm. 1: I; 2 Cor. 4:5). However, false prophets are not like this. They put themselves on a pedestal, bragging that they are "under the influence of the spirit," and that they are messengers of God. In this way they lord it over people and put them down. They also disobey the Lord's teachings.

(6) They divide the Church (cf. Jn. 10:10, 12). The Lord gave us a new commandment. He told us to love one another as he loved us (cf. Jn. 13:34-5). In Jesus' last prayer before he took leave of his disciples, he asked the Father several times to preserve the disciples' unity, just as he and the Father were one (cf. Jn. 17:11; 22-3). But false prophets are not like this. They



create factions and divisions. Like thieves and robbers, they steal and destroy. And like a wicked wolf, they scatter the sheep. Everyone knows that all who create divisions in the Church disobey the Lord's commandment. We must conscientiously guard ourselves against the destructive actions of false prophets, and "eagerly maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

(7) They have their eyes on money (cf. I Tim. 6:3-5). All false prophets have this common trademark: they have their eyes on money. "Imagining that godliness is a means of gain" is one of their most outstanding characteristics. Some independent preachers, who specialize in praying over sick people, charge a certain amount of money for each prayer service. Or they have a certain price for casting out devils. What is the difference between this action of theirs and the behavior of witches and sorcerers? How can we tolerate the holy name of prophet being tarnished in this way?

(8) They preach fantasies and speculations which have nothing to do with reality (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-7). The "teaching of different doctrines" which Paul talks about in the first epistle to Timothy can include the actions of false prophets. Their trademark is that they do not interpret God's word or law according to its true meaning. Rather they make use of fantasies and speculations to deceive the believers. Today they say they "saw a strange omen;" tomorrow they will say they "had a strange dream." Or they will say that God has bestowed extraordinary powers on a certain individual, and that at such and such a place (usually very far away) a miracle has taken place. Sometimes they clearly go counter to the Lord's word (Mk. 13:32) by absurdly declaring that after a certain period of time has elapsed, the Lord will return. They exhort people to abandon everything and concentrate their attention on waiting for the Lord. Dear brothers and sisters, beseech the Lord to help us "so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Eph. 4:14).

(9) One important telltale sign is: consider their fruits (cf. Mt. 7:17; 21:43). When we observe another person, we first look to see whether or not he acts in accordance with God's word. How do we verify this? We rely on his fruits. This means that we not only observe a person's actions but that we take into account the fruits produced by these actions. Then we can judge whether they come from a good tree or a bad tree. As for those wolves in sheep's clothing, on the basis of their evil actions and the fruits their actions produce, we can clearly recognize them.

(10) The most fundamental difference (cf. 1 Jn. 4:1-3). When the apostle John was in the last years of his life, he wrote a letter to the church, saying, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world." Before this faithful old servant could rest from the heavy responsibility of his labors, he had this one concern constantly on his mind: a fear that the disciples would be deceived. Here through the lips of John, the Holy Spirit tells us the most basic difference between true and false prophets. "Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God... Every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of anti-Christ." Things cannot be any clearer. This really is the most valuable "touchstone" and the most authoritative "demon-detector" that we have. Let us hold high the

honored name of Christ, take up the double-edged sword of the Spirit, guard well the flock of God and be faithful servants of the Lord.

May the Spirit of wisdom and understanding be with us always and may he bestow upon us the grace of "discernment of spirits." Amen.

*From The Syllabus, No. 6 (/988), p. 67.*

*Translated by Peter Barry, M.M.*

## 17. Inspiration from the Three Wise Men – Wan Chao

Text: Matthew 2:1-12

For many generations the Jewish people had eagerly looked for Christ the Messiah, and when he came not a single Jew was aware of his arrival. Three uncircumcised Gentile wise men were the first to know of the Messiah's birth. These three wise men came from far away in the east enduring the hardships of an arduous journey, braving deserts and barren wastelands, over mountains and rivers, bringing with them precious gifts - gold, incense and myrrh. They devoutly worshipped the new-born king with a genuine affection. On the other hand, the ordinary Jewish people, Pharisees, scribes, the high priest and other priests were by comparison, one may say, really shown up. For the brilliant star that revealed Christ's birthplace shone over Judea and Jerusalem, and not even one person there discovered it. This ought to cause us to ponder deeply. If we say that the ordinary Jewish people had no time for higher things because they were busy with the things of this world that might that explain their missing the event.

The upper echelon of the leadership called themselves watchmen, the scribes looked after the law and the holy scriptures, the high priest and order of the priesthood were God's representatives on earth. Why then did they miss seeing the brilliant golden light of that beautiful star? What were they doing all day long? Perhaps they were busy with sacrifices and worship, rituals, ceremonies and religious protocol. Perhaps they were busy with details of the law and textual criticism of the books of the prophets, or busy researching and investigating which parchment scrolls were the originals, which were authoritative or which deserved the stamp of approval. In a word they were busy with earthly matters, with their own business, and did not even have the heart to catch a glimpse of things above. They were sticklers for the letter of the law and the words of the prophecies and they missed that extraordinary spiritual experience.

Only when these three Gentile wise men came seeking the place where this king of the Jews was to be born were the Jews brought out of their peaceful, stagnant lake water-like life and thrown into confusion. The peace in their hearts changed to alarm. Yet the priests and scribes were indifferent because they could not accept such reasoning, could not understand, could not reach a consensus on the matter. They were thoroughly convinced that they themselves were the custodians of God's word. They could not believe that a Messiah revealed by star to uncircumcised Gentiles was reliable or really possible. They knew God would not pass over them and give his revelation Gentiles. So they underestimated, even despised this news which struck fear in the hearts of King Herod and the people of Jerusalem. They were not even willing to go to Bethlehem to see for themselves, figuring it was a heresy, and could only result in confusion, even chaos.

When they set out these three wise men had no idea where they were going, much the same as when Abraham left his home "without knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8). Even more than this they did not act on their own, and as they followed the star they overcame the hardships of the road and gained strength over all kinds of difficulties and their faith was much increased.

When they arrived in Judea they began to lean on their own understanding, figuring the new king would be born in the city of Jerusalem. They agreed among themselves that the only place worth of the birth of the new king would be the holy city of Jerusalem because the resplendent and magnificent holy temple stood there and inside the temple were the holy place, the Holy of Holies, God throne, the priests and vessels of sacrifice. They looked at Jerusalem as being far too holy, it was heaven on earth for them. Such a view of the city was within reason as it conformed to the traditions of that day.

Therefore they felt they no longer needed the bright guiding star they had trusted thus far and trusted instead in their own judgement, no longer following or looking up to the star. They trusted their own wisdom and went to Jerusalem. God has always respected humankind's free will, he has never forced anyone to receive his revelation no follow his leading, so the star in the heavens could only wait. It was not until they were treated with disdain by the scribes and priests and heard the lies of the evil Herod that they once again took up their journey. Then it was that they suddenly saw again the brilliant star that had been leading them so faithfully (Mt. 2:9). They could n help feeling ashamed and they thoroughly regretted acting on the own instead of closely following the star. Because of their superstitions about Jerusalem, its scribes and priests, they had wasted their time on the wrong road. As the Chinese proverb says "fall into a pit, but gain some wit;" at least they learned from their mistake. From this moment on they would not seek direction or instruction from anyone, and definitely would not ask about the whereabouts of the birth of the Christ. They would with one mind and one heart closely follow the star.

Under the leadership of the star they quickly came into the presence of the newborn king, Christ Jesus. "A child is born to us! A son is given to us!... He will be called, `Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.'" (Is. 9:6). The Shepherd of Israel and King of Kings, came unto his own land, but his own people did not receive him, nor bring him gifts. They would not even provide a house to be born in, but only a manger. They could not have dreamed that the first to worship him would be uncircumcised Gentiles, or that their gifts had not come through the intermediaries, the priests. Nor could the Jews have imagined that the gifts would not have been blessed by the priests but brought directly and offered to the Lord Christ. The wise men had become their own priests. The priests, who had the supreme authority in such things, clearly did not anticipate this; it is highly possible even the angels of heaven were amazed and astonished. They would have been even more amazed had they known that in the future humankind would follow the wise men's example of giving. No longer would gifts be offered through the mediation of priests but dedicated and given directly to Christ. That hereditary right of the priests was canceled by the declaration of Christ's coming to earth. But the priests could not, were not capable of understanding anything relating to the birth of that one in the manger.

From this event we can see that the Jew's refusal of the Christ, even to nailing him to a cross, has combined to bring God's salvation not only to the Jews and the Gentiles, but to all humankind. The three wise men represent the worship and devotion of the Gentiles. To God all are equal, there are no second-class citizens and he is not partial to any. You only need to believe to receive his true revelation and know his leadership. Because these

three wise men believed the promise of Num. 24:17, "I look into the future, and I see the nation of Israel. A King, like a bright star, will arise in that nation," when they saw that star that was like no other they set out for the land of Jacob and Judah. The scribes and priests of Jerusalem, who knew the prophecy but refused to believe it are in such stark contrast with the wise men. They become a warning for us.

Just as God's grace inspired these Gentiles into Christ's presence, I firmly believe God will in the very same way lead us to Christ. We do not have gifts like gold, incense and myrrh. The risen Christ has no need of these things anyway. But we do have something more precious than these to give as an offering to Christ. We can dedicate our bodies, hearts and minds to him. This is what is needed today. As we celebrate Christ's birth may we give without reservation our very selves, our hearts and our minds to him. That is our gift to him. May the Lord bless and use you.

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*Translated by Britt E. Towery, Jr.*

## 18. "Do You Love Me?" – Yang Xuan

The many of excitements of spring have fled Beijing and summer is upon us, its green foliage spilling over alleys and lanes, blocking the sun and obscuring the sky. We will never forget the seasons we've passed in our four years in the capitol. What has been in this vineyard will gradually grow up under the cultivation and pruning of our Lord of grace. Before long, we will part from our seminary and teachers, and dedicate ourselves to the huge task of spreading the gospel. Tears and sweat will go into the plowing and weeding, but we will also see the harvest and cherish golden autumn days.

These days, I feel as if a thousand-catty weight has suddenly been loaded onto my shoulders. I am still young, how can I take over the care of the Lord's sheep? However, this is a time when the Lord calls and commissions us. Who am I to reject God's call or to shirk his mission?

Recently, the Holy Spirit revealed to me a short Bible passage and taught me something through the story of Peter and his companions at Lake Tiberias. I learned that loving the Lord is the basis for any pastoral work.

In the gusts of the early morning wind, amid the sounds of the tide on the shores of the big lake, the risen Lord appears again to reveal himself to Peter. Gazing kindly at him for a long time, he raises his gentle, thoughtful voice three times to ask Peter: "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" - "Do you love me?" - "Do you love me?" After the third time, Peter starts to feel depressed, even a bit hurt and answers: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

Could Peter help feeling hurt? For three years, he had lived with the Lord morn till night; together they had gone through a good deal. His love for the Lord overflowed his heart into words and action. When they were in Gethsemane, as Jesus faced imminent danger, and the other disciples dispersed in all directions, it was Peter who bravely stepped forward, drew his sword and struck the high priest's slave, cutting off his ear. In this dark night of fierce dogs and roaring lions, when Jesus was arrested and escorted to the high priest's court, Peter loved the Lord so wholeheartedly that he did not care about his own safety, but followed him as far as he could. At Lake Tiberias, although he is busy hauling in the net, as soon as he hears the disciple Jesus loved whisper: "It is the Lord," he drops the net full of fish, throws on his clothes and jumps into the water to get to the Lord's side as quickly and as closely as possible. Are not all of Peter's actions here evidence of his love for the Lord?

In John 14, verse 21 we read: "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me." This is the love Jesus wants from Peter: listening to his commandments, and keeping them.

Let us measure Peter by this demand of the Lord. "Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward.' Peter said to him, 'Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my

life for you." (Jn. 13: 36-37). Peter had the Lord's commandment: "You cannot follow me now," but Peter, full of fine hopes, in a burst of emotion and rash courage, acted against the Lord's commandment; he followed him - and consequently he failed and failed miserably.

No wonder that Jesus in his gentle and soft voice calls Peter to account: "Do you love me?"

Measuring Peter's love by the Lord's demand, let us look further into Peter's love for the Lord.

When Jesus revealed himself to the eleven disciples after his resurrection, he greeted them by saying: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. ... If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn. 20: 21-23). This was the Lord's commandment for Peter and the others. But Peter did not obey it; he did not commit himself to the Lord's commission to be a fisher of people. Instead, he returned to Lake Tiberias and acted as his own master: "I am going fishing." Peter took up his old profession again, returning to the life of a fisherman, and what was the result? In that night he caught nothing. Instead of becoming a shepherd for the Lord, he disobeyed his commandment. He did not go to tend the Lord's sheep, but cared only himself. Again: where would be the love of such a person for the Lord? And what is even worse: When Peter said "I am going fishing," the other disciples lost no time in replying: "We will go with you." It is not only that Peter himself went astray, he put all of his fellow disciples on the wrong track. If the risen Lord had not come himself to look for them, it would be hard to say for how long they would have struggled on the brink of ruin, misled to a failed life. The Bible records: "When Jesus stood on the beach, day was breaking."

No wonder that Jesus in his gentle and soft voice calls Peter to account: "Do you love me more than these?"

Let us observe more closely Peter fishing on Lake Tiberias and continue to look into his love for the Lord. When he casts the net again and again, he does not know that it is the Lord who obstructs it. When the risen Lord appears to them, he does not know that he is the Lord. When the Lord speaks to him, he still does not know. Even when the Lord performs a sign from God and lets them catch so many fish that they are not able to haul the net in, he still does not realize that this is the Lord. How can we believe that a person loves the Lord when he does not even recognize him? Jesus said to the people in Israel: "Even though you do not believe me, you should believe me for the works I do." Peter sees the Lord as he manifests himself; he hears his voice, and he watches what he is doing, but he still does not recognize him. Is that strange? No, not really. The obstacle which prevents Peter from recognizing and loving the Lord is the fact that Peter has not treasured the Lord's commandments in his heart and followed them.

No wonder that the Lord, in his gentle and soft voice, calls Peter to account: "Do you love me?" Now we can see: Peter's showy and arrogant way of expressing his love for the Lord is a kind of immature love, a selfish love, based on flesh and blood. It is not a love which walks in Christ Jesus, not a love which walks in the will of God.

That is why Jesus impresses on his disciples: "Apart from me you can do nothing." This is the spiritual standard we must apply to Peter in order to assess his love for the Lord.

But let us now return to the shores of Lake Tiberias. By this time, daylight has come with rosy clouds of dawn, on the beach a campfire is burning, an appetizing aroma rises from roasting fish and bread. Peter and his companions, all exhausted, are coming up from the water front; their stomachs are rumbling with hunger; their clothes, wet from sweat and water, cling to their bodies and make them shiver with cold in the gusty morning wind. One by one, they kneel down, and lowering their heads, with shame on their faces, they crouch around the dim, yet warming fire. They are sitting across from Jesus; but "none of them dared ask him, 'Who are you?'"

Jesus turns his calm and gentle face toward Peter, and with his hand which bears the mark of the nail, he passes him steaming hot food. Peter reaches out his hand to take the piece of bread, but before he starts eating, he slowly raises his head and bravely sustains Jesus' gaze. This is the moment he receives the Lord's illumination which fills him with the Lord's great love. And in the overwhelming light of this love, Peter suddenly realizes what a poor, weak and corrupt figure he actually is... At this moment, hot tears gush from his eyes, his lips start trembling, and he wishes he could again fall down at Jesus' feet and cry out from the depth of his heart: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

As Peter is illumined by the Lord, while he is questioning himself and pondering the Lord's great love, while he is gradually comprehending how to love the Lord, Jesus is looking at him expectantly, and finally, in an ardent voice, again entrusts Peter with his great mission: "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep".

Yes, only when we recognize and receive the Lord's love can we feed the lord's lambs; only when our heart is filled with love for the Lord can we tend the Lord's sheep; and only when we have his commandments and keep them (Jn. 14: 21) can we feed the Lord's sheep.

Lord, do I have a heart that loves you properly? Am I able to feed your sheep well, oh Lord? Indeed, my heart and my love are too small, but I am willing to seek your will and to obey your decrees. I will continue to seek to know myself and to know your great love. Let it fill me and thus empowered deep in my heart by your Holy Spirit, I will tend your sheep.

It is late. The daily noise and excitement of the capitol have grown still. God is going to cover all creation with a light, soft layer of black gauze. Oh Lord, may all your sheep lie down in green pastures; beside the still waters, restore their souls.

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Translated by Gotthard Oblau.*



## 19. The Lord of Sorrows – Wang Weifan

In the 43rd chapter of the Book of Isaiah Yahweh laments:

Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob;  
but you have been weary of me,  
O Israel!  
You have not brought me your sheep  
for burnt offerings,  
or honored me with your sacrifices.  
I have not burdened you with offerings,  
or wearied you with frankincense.  
You have not bought me sweet cane with money,  
or satisfied me with the fat of your  
sacrifices.  
But you have burdened me with your sins,  
you have wearied me with your  
iniquities.

The term "burdened" here means to take up a heavy load, to suffer, to tire; "wearied" means to suffer hardship and tribulation, to suffer disquiet and distress, to bear fatigue and sleeplessness. This means that the offerings, suffering and tribulations of the people have not been imposed upon them by God. It is not God who has tired them out with incense, nor is it God who has caused their suffering, tribulation, disquiet and distress. On the contrary, it is the people who have distressed and wearied God with their sins. They have caused God to take up a heavy burden and undergo spiritual tribulation. God is the one who is filled with the people's disquiet, mental anguish and distress.

If humankind had not sinned, the Bible might consist of a brief thirty-four verses, ending with Genesis 2:3: "And on the seventh day (God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done." If God were not a God who shouldered heavy burdens and felt sorrow over the sins and iniquities of humankind, the Bible might end with Genesis 3:7. There would be no need for God to walk in the Garden, searching and calling out to Adam: "Man, where are you?" This means that the whole of the Bible is the history of God's burden and sorrow over human sin. And all of human history is likewise a history of God's shouldering the burden of human iniquity, of God's tribulation, God's torment and feelings of weariness over human sin. This is the understanding of "My Father is working still" which we see in Isaiah 43:24. Humankind has never genuinely served God or obeyed God. From beginning to end it has always been God who sorrows and God who toils for humankind.

It is very difficult for those who have been brought up in traditional Chinese culture to accept a God who transcends creation and the human world. The Chinese prefer to bow down to a "superman," a sovereign emperor or a great leader. We cannot seem to

comprehend a transcendent God. In Western humanism God and humankind are rivals, but God is absent from Chinese humanism. A person who has been brought up in traditional Chinese culture finds it even more difficult to accept a God who labors for humankind, a God who bears heavy burdens for his people, who suffers tribulation for them, one who feels ill at ease and suffers for humanity. For the Chinese, an object of worship must always be an idol from on high to whom homage is paid, one who receives burning incense and the flesh and blood of the people. But the God revealed in Isaiah does not require burnt offerings, incense and sacrifices. On the contrary, God is a God who suffers for human iniquities, bearing our heavy burdens and enduring our tribulation. He can find rest only when mortals find rest. God is with humankind in the tribulation of life after creation and rests only in their redemption.

Precisely because ours is a God who is anxious over the iniquities of humanity, Jesus Christ who was sent among us could be nothing other than a "suffering servant." Christ's destiny could not be other than to- take up the burden of human sorrow and shoulder human suffering. This is why God suffered for our sin and paid a great price in punishment and torture, in order to gain peace and healing for humankind. As it was prophesied in Isaiah 53:

Surely he has borne our grieves  
and carried our sorrows;...  
But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
he was bruised for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that  
made us whole,  
and with his stripes we are healed.

"Wounded" can mean pierced, or pierced through; "bruised" can also mean flayed and "stripes" means covered with scars. When we come right down to it, Christ could not but be a Lord of sorrows.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was sent to his death by Hitler, once said: "When we are called by Christ, we are called to follow him to the cross." What does it mean to follow Christ to the cross? It means first and foremost taking up the burden of human suffering and having one's soul pierced by human transgressions, chastised, punished and willingly scarred for the sake of human peace and healing.

There are no great individuals in history who suffered for human sin to the same extent that God and Christ did. No human being has borne the burden of suffering, calamity and hardship. In the introduction to his biography of Beethoven, Romain Rolland wrote:

"The lives in these biographies are nearly all lives of prolonged suffering. It might be a tragic fate which abrades the soul in the midst of bodily and spiritual suffering and tempers it on the anvil of poverty and illness; or a life may be blighted, a heart shattered through witnessing the shame and misfortunes of one's people; without doubt it is force of will which makes these people great, but it is also trial and tribulation."

The famous translator Fu Lei, who rendered this biography into Chinese, wrote in his introduction:

"Only genuine suffering can drive out suffering of romantic illusion; only seeing the heroic tragedy of suffering which has been overcome can help us to endure a cruel destiny; only by maintaining a spirit which says "if I do not enter hell, who will?" can we save a dispirited and selfish people: this is the lesson I gleaned from my first reading of this book fifteen years ago (1927).

"Surrender without struggle is hypocritical; detachment which has not been tempered by misfortune is frivolous; worldly wisdom which is an escape from reality is cowardly; the golden mean, resignation and compromise are our fatal wounds: this is a conviction which has been growing steadily in me these fifteen years. And all of this is revealed in the life of Beethoven."

It was tragic that Fu Lei and his wife came to an unjust end during the Cultural Revolution. He was unable to save a people fanatical on the surface, but dispirited underneath, a people whose slogan was collectivity, but who were in fact selfish. This people still awaits salvation.

There are at least two kinds of people in God's house and they have been there all along. One type has no consciousness of sorrow and is not anxious over the suffering of God's people; they even benefit from it and this is why Amos cursed them:

Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory,  
and stretch themselves upon their couches,  
and eat lambs from the flock,  
and calves from the midst of the stall;  
who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,  
and like David invent for themselves  
instruments of music;  
who drink wine in bowls,  
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,  
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!  
(Amos 6:4-8)

The other type also has no consciousness of distress, for they are used to covering things up, like those cursed by Jeremiah:

They have healed the wound of my people lightly,  
saying, "Peace, peace,"  
when there is no peace....  
...they were not at all ashamed;  
they did not know how to blush. (Jer. 6:14-15)

But a true prophet brims with a deep awareness of the sorrow in God's house. Jeremiah is called "the weeping prophet" because of his grief over the suffering of the Israelites. Jeremiah could not be comforted (Jer. 8:18).

T.C. Chao was a tragic theologian who, as early as 1950, cried out in pain: "If the Chinese Church today can reform itself it will survive, if it cannot reform itself, or if it is not willing to, then it will perish!" To reform the Chinese Church, it was first necessary to transform the people responsible for it: "To reform the church is to transform the people responsible for it. We must transform their thinking, their style of work, their very hearts.

"If the leadership does not take the initiative in reforming their own hearts, there is no way the Chinese Church can reform ... we who serve Jesus Christ, who gaze upon our Lord who gave himself on the cross for us, should we not feel utter remorse? Beneath the cross, can we still maintain our rights and privileges? ... If we would reform the Church, must we not first, genuinely and sincerely, in pain and bitterness, reform ourselves?"

T.C. Chao's call to arms of the 1950s seems deafening to us in the Chinese Church today. But at the time, no one took any notice of it. At that time the reform movement had in reality become a purely political movement, and once this had happened, the Chinese Church no longer listened to the voice of T.C. Chao "crying in the wilderness."

In the last thirty years the Chinese Church has experienced a great deal of internal hardship and external interference. Its wounds are not yet fully healed and its trembling has yet to be stilled. Today the Church needs "innocents" who will love her, devote themselves to her, comfort her and heal her. When will the Chinese Church be healed? When the heart of each and every innocent has been pierced, even pierced through, bruised and even beaten! When will the Chinese Church find peace? When the heart of each and every innocent has been filled with sorrow and suffering, even marked with the stripes of the lash! Since Christ is a Lord of sorrows, since Christ has suffered, can his disciples do otherwise? Paul wished to complete in his body "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,"(Col. 1:24). Likewise the Chinese Church today is in need of those who will "complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" for her!

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*Translated by Janice and Philip Wickeri*

## 20. About the Authors

Bao Zhimin	Graduate student, Nanjing Theological Seminary
Ji Jianhong	Chairman, Jiangsu Provincial Three-Sell Patriotic Movement Committee
Kong Xiangjian	Deputy Editor, <i>The Syllabus</i>
Liu Xiaofeng	Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, Shenzhen University
Luo Zhufeng	Academica Sinica, Shanghai
K.H. Ting	Principal, Nanjing Theological Seminary President, China Christian Council
Wan Chao	1988 graduate, Nanjing Theological Seminary, serving Shu Yang Church, Huaiyin, Jiangsu
Wang Weifan	Associate Professor of New Testament and Head of Publications Department, Nanjing Theological Seminary
Wang Xuefu	Graduate student, Chinese Department Nanjing University
Xiao Anping	Graduate student, Nanjing Theological Seminary
Yang Xuan	Student, Yanjing Seminary
Yang Zhouhuai	Instructor, Yanjing Seminary
Zi Zhu	Graduate student, Nanjing Theological Seminary