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cross, Jesus became a ransom for all (Matt. 20:28). Moved with love and compassion, God came to redeem us.

Unfortunately the views of radicals, be they political or theological, generally get more publicity than those of moderates. Because of this, some positive points in black theology could be totally eclipsed by focusing on the radical negative elements. Some critics have questioned whether or not it is authentic to speak of a black theology. p. 146

How shall we Caribbean evangelical educators respond to black theology? A response is necessary. As Caribbean evangelicals we should respond to black theology because notwithstanding some positive things, it cuts across the grain of evangelical teaching on some fundamental issues.

While it may be true that black theology is not a present threat to the evangelical faith in the region, this is no reason why it should be swept under the carpet. With our close proximity to and frequency of communication with North America and inter-locked as we are with their education system, black theology might infiltrate our region and offer a strong challenge. Are we prepared for this challenge?

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Lindsay A. Arscott of Jamaica is Principal of the Bethel Bible College, Jamaica. p. 147

The Gospel and Chinese Society

Samuel Ling

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Evangelical interest in evangelizing the Chinese people has increased as China begins to open her doors to the West. Among the Chinese of the diaspora, the church is maturing and a new generation of theologically conscious leaders is emerging. In such a context, theological reflection on the Christian message for the Chinese people is something which is both timely and desirable. The increase in training programmes designed for cross-cultural as well as national workers among the Chinese, in North American theological schools, will encourage this trend.

I CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

Theology involves an interface between the text and the context, the infallible Scripture and the cultural situation. In the case of the Chinese context, a multi-disciplinary approach is needed. Insights need to be integrated from biblical, theological and historical studies, as well as from studies in Chinese literature and art forms, the social and behavioural sciences and the history of the Chinese church. What makes the task more complex is that the Chinese cultural context is itself changing: what does it mean, after all, to say that one is 'Chinese' today? What is the common denominator between a foreign exchange student from the People's Republic of China studying in North America, a scientist from Taiwan teaching in a North American university, a restaurant worker from Hong Kong and his wife working in a garment factory in Chinatown, a fourth-generation American-born

Chinese professional, a doctor from Taiwan working in South America and his children and ethnic Chinese, completely immersed in the cultures of the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia? It is futile to seek living examples of pure, traditional Chinese culture; to speak of the Maoist 'Socialist Man' as contemporary Chinese culture is equally simplistic. The heirs of the Middle Kingdom constitute a worldwide 'salad-bowl' of ethnic Chinese; whether they share similar values, beliefs, and worldviews is not altogether clear.

To reflect on theology and the Chinese cultural context, one needs to keep in mind the Confucian-Taoist worldview which sees China as the Middle Kingdom, man as the correlate of nature, and *jen*, or 'humane-ness', as the ideal in life.[1] Into this consensus entered p. 148 Buddhism which, through its art forms, penetrated Chinese culture and assimilated itself so successfully that historians and missiologists are still wondering why Christianity by comparison, remained such a foreign religion.[2] This traditional culture went through an agonizing transformation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a process of change marked by humiliation, suffering, identity crisis and the search for a modern apparatus for statecraft.[3]

In this modern transformation, there are several figure types which, if studied carefully, may yield useful clues for evangelism and church growth among the Chinese. For example, the role of the gentry on the local village level is a significant reason why Chinese are, and continue to be, antagonistic toward Christianity as a foreign religion.[4] As the central power of the imperial government fell into the hands of regional military leaders, 'warlordism' became a factor in Chinese life: disunity and conflict became the context for the search for national salvation.[5] The origins, leadership style, and patterns of conflict of the warlords are all worth careful investigation. Then there is the Taoist and Buddhist monk, on the fringe of society, embodying man's retreat from culture to nature, and performing rituals essential to the bonding of the clan community.[6] To what extent are missionaries and Chinese pastors still regarded as 'western monks'? And what about the secret societies, religious in their ideology but always posing a socio-political threat to the imperial court—the Taipings as an example?[7] Is the idea of the Christian Church—a voluntary society of individuals and families bound together by a common commitment to a theology and a lifestyle—so foreign to the mainstream of Chinese thought and culture, that one looks to the 'fringe' for analogies?

As China turned to the West, she reluctantly assigned specific individuals the task of dealing with foreign merchants. These agents— p. 149 *compradores*—were strictly regulated by the government officials; their usefulness was highly qualified by the

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[1] Derk Bodde, 'Harmony and Confict in Chinese Philosophy', *Studies in Chinese Thought*, Arthur Wright (ed.), (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1953).

[2] Arthur Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1969).

[3] Joseph R. Lovenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

[4] Chung-li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955); Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963).

[5] Stanley, Spector, *Li Hung-chang and the Huai Army* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964); Jerome Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai 1895–1916* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961); James E. Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord: The Gamer of Eeng Yuhsiang* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966).

[6] C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1961).

[7] Vincent Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Source, Interpretations and Influence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967).

foreigners' interests. They embodied a generation of westernized Chinese, whose children were to grow up and learn western languages and business practices—often from the missionary![8] What lessons has the Chinese Church learned from the *compradores* as she grows, matures and takes her place in the worldwide community of believers? How do we work together with the missionary community in dignity and joy, without undue dependence? Will the tradition of 'rice Christians' live on into the twenty-first century?

The search for modern science and technology as the answer to China's social problems is most evidently embodied in the foreign student. In the early years of this century, the student went to France, Japan and the United States, and returned in the 1910s to introduce western thought—wholesale, hardly thought through or sorted out—to his compatriots. In the case of the Christian colleges in China, representing the 'socializing wing' of the western missionaries, who saw liberal arts education as the bridge between China and the West, their mission and role was no longer unique by the 1910s.[9] The returned foreign student is a type in Chinese society and the Chinese church, in the May Fourth era (1916–1927) as well as today.[10]

Evangelizing and discipling the contemporary Chinese community in diaspora is a complex and tedious process. Chinese today are highly pragmatic in their approach to life—in this they have learned from both their ancestors (pragmatism as the counterpart to Confucian-Taoist mysticism) and from the West. The processes of urbanization, westernization and immigration have all affected the face of the Chinese community. It seems that the most fruitful way to 'do theology' in such a context is to 'do ministry'. Could one speak of 'indigenous ministry as theology?' The struggles and the maturing of the Chinese Church in diaspora deserve careful study.[11] A few clues from the Chinese society as well as from the life of the Chinese Church p. 150 follow, to suggest paths of inquiry toward the formation of the contours of contextual theology.

II DOCTRINE OF MAN

To evangelize the Chinese people, the missionary needs to teach what Scripture teaches about *man*, as well as what it teaches about God. Traditional Chinese thought and culture is tremendously interested in the life of man: how he relates to nature; how he functions in society with a specifically assigned station and role; how he maintains equilibrium in the midst of social and political change.[12] Contemporary Chinese experience is no less interested in man: How does one face the tremendous suffering brought about by two centuries of war and revolution? What does the Bible say about man's predicament? A theology built around the experience of man as unifying theme, which is both theocentric and compassionate, is something worth the effort.

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[8] Albert Feuerwerker, *China's Early Industrialization: Sheng Hsuan-huai (1844–1916) and Mandarin Enterprise* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).

[9] Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967); Jessie G. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970); Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916–1952* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

[10] For example, the Breakthrough Movement in Hong Kong, began in 1973; and *Na Han* magazine, launched in 1983.

[11] Gail Law (ed.), *Chinese Churches Handbook* (Hong Kong: Chinese Coordination Center of World Evangelism, 1982).

[12] Derk Bodde, *China's Cultural Tradition: What and Whither?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957).

The God who revealed himself in Scripture is a God who came into covenant with man. Covenant is the form of divine intervention into time and space and the bond with which the infinite Creator bound himself. Our God is faithful to his promises. The very act of creation is a covenant act: the creator charges man with the task of covenant obedience. After the Fall, God's providence continues to uphold civilization. Into the world of suffering and evil God came in human flesh, to establish the new covenant with his blood. Covenant theology could yield much fruit when applied to the Chinese concern with man's predicament.

And what about the family and the community? Does not the Bible present God's covenant with his people in the context of family instruction and communal worship? The role of the husband and father as covenant keeper and teacher of the law speaks to the Chinese quest for the harmonious clan. Much anthropological and historical inquiry would draw out the implications of the biblical doctrine of family and community for the Chinese situation. There *is* an alternative to preaching an individual-oriented gospel.

III CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

'What is truth?' Pilate asked Jesus. In the traditional Chinese understanding, truth is acquired—arrived at—through a dual process P. 151 of mystical communion with nature (the ideal *chun-tzu*, gentleman) and exemplary ethical behaviour in the context of the community (the sage-prince). Chinese epistemology is both mystical and pragmatic. Neither of which is particularly similar to the western cognitive-oriented approach. It is fascinating to note that when Chinese Protestants wrote their theologies in the 1920s and 1930s, in both 'liberal' and 'conservative' quarters a mystical approach emerged. To contextualize theology in the Chinese situation is to use the 'right-brain approach'. T. C. Chao, professor of religion at Yenching University and China's foremost theologian, wrote poems, prayers, liturgies, lyrics and fiction. His vision for the Chinese church is deeply immersed in the poetic, literary, mystical realm. Chao was a thoroughgoing Confucian; he was trained in the classics. He was also trained in the western liberal tradition at Vanderbilt University. Chao struggled with two identities—Confucian Chinese and liberal Christian. In the end he lived through the tension between these two value Systems; he celebrated the tension in the poetic realm; he transcended it by taking a non-cognitive approach. In his prayers and lyrics we hear both the Christian message and the Confucian vision; tension is transcended with the very medium of expression. Looking to the fundamentalists, we find Watchman Nee speaking of the 'release of the Spirit in man', borrowing heavily from T. Austin-Sparks and the Plymouth Brethren movement. Nee's influence both among Chinese and western Christians lies in his search for an experience-based piety which would meet the needs of the human heart. There is much anti-intellectualism in contemporary Chinese evangelical circles, and some of the influence comes from Nee's theology.

Young Chinese church leaders today are trained in the classical western approach: highly cognitive, analytic, systematic. Perhaps a literary, poetic, and mystical dimension needs to be integrated into this form of theological training. As the church expresses her understanding in both intellectual and aesthetic terms, she will speak of the transcendent God who is the living and true God; she will wrestle with inscripturation as the very process of covenant making; she will wrestle with obedience to the law and freedom in the Spirit; she will learn to encounter God himself through worship. In coming to Christ, one has found the way, the truth and the life.

IV THE CHINESE CHURCH

In the contemporary Chinese Church, encouraging signs point to a maturing community. Easy believism gives way to more thought-out P. 152 methods of disciple-making and church growth; the deep spiritual emphasis is not dying out; in the deeper recesses of the Chinese Christian consciousness there is the search for power in the charismatic dimension. Leadership patterns are both puzzling and encouraging: the laity is awakened to serve the church; women's role is not only unclear, but it lacks encouragement from the Christian community; and increasingly the Chinese churches are exploring structures for co-operation and unity, bypassing the traditional ecclesiastical (denominational) structure for models which resemble 'networking'. How does one speak the gospel into such a context?

Can one speak of sanctification as the very context of justification? Chinese are intensely interested in how to live the Christian life—what is the 'pay-off' in this life if one becomes a Christian? Perhaps in delineating justification and sanctification too distinctly, we lose the unity of what the Spirit does in the process of applying Christ's benefits. Here insights from spiritual formation will prove helpful. What about leadership? What is leadership? Traditionally Chinese have lived with both a formal pattern of leadership (the imperial government) and an informal, but recognized pattern (the local gentry). While all pay homage to the emperor, the 'eyes of the people are bright as snow'. Power abuse and injustice are concerns which are often unspoken, but nonetheless real. The servant of Jesus Christ needs to pray for the power of the powerless—empowered by the Spirit of God, the servant empowers the people of God unto ministry. Dare the church turn over the tools of servanthood to the laity? Will a leadership pattern emerge which borrows from the best of both the 'formal' and the 'informal' approaches?

The Chinese community is a variety of ethnic Chinese. Chinese culture itself is changing. How does the Church—wonderfully gifted by the Spirit with talents and abilities, but frightfully small in comparison with overall Chinese population—speak the gospel into this context? By re-discovering the vision of the transcendent, covenant-maker God; by ministering with the deepest compassion for man trapped in his predicament of sin and suffering; by empowering the people of God with both the *dunamis* and the tools for ministry. Then will the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Hard work, yes, but wonderful yields await us.

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Dr. Samuel Ling is an organizing pastor of the Chinese Presbyterian Church of America and pastor of the Covenant Church in New York City, U.S.A. p. 153

Dialogue on China

Jonathan Chao and Ralph Covell

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A Discussion on the Church in China with Jonathan Chao and Ralph Covell.