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question all authority structures. Our misgivings concerning the papacy do not rely upon such arguments, in view of the basic anarchistic spirit which inspires them.

More significant for evangelicals is the larger theological background which forms the context for the pronouncement on papal infallibility. This dogma is a final consequence of that infallibility which is attributed to the Church of Rome itself. If the Church of Rome were indeed infallible and as such prior and superior to Scripture, its appeal to Scripture would be devoid of real significance.

Taking issue with this view, Luther already placed the Roman Catholic position on the same level as the doctrine of the 'Enthusiasts', [p. 364](#) since in both cases the claimed possession of the Holy Spirit implies an independence from the Word of God.¹⁰ For evangelical faith, however, it is not the church which gives birth to the Word, but the Word which gives birth to the church ([1 Peter 1:23](#), [James 1:18](#)). We have but one Master, whose infallible teaching is contained once and for all in the Scriptures. Listening to and obeying that Word, we hear the message of the one and only Lord.

Scripture leaves no room for mere corrections on the Roman Catholic doctrine of the papacy. It compels us instead to reject the very idea of Petrine primacy as the basis for papal infallibility. The New Testament is not concerned to elevate Peter above the other apostles, nor to institute an enduring 'office of Peter'; nor did Peter himself ever suggest it ([1 Peter 5:1-4](#)). Truth and unity are far better served by the confession of the unique lordship of Jesus Christ than in any other way. Under the kingship of Jesus Christ as the sole and supreme Head of the Church, we as Evangelicals therefore seek to honour the subservient role of God's people in the governance of the church through their exercise of the office of all believers.

The papacy, with its claim to infallibility, stands in the way of renewal within Roman Catholicism. It also poses an immense obstacle to Christian unity. It prevents, moreover, an obedient listening to the voice of the one true Lord of the church. The doctrine of papal infallibility is therefore not a 'divinely revealed dogma'¹¹ which 'all Christians must believe'.¹² It is rather an idea which no Christian can accept without denying the teachings of the infallible Scriptures. [p. 365](#)

Ministerial Formation for the Working Class: The Jifu Programme

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Hong Kong has been prominent in the news recently because of 1997. For sure, the era of British rule will end when China regains her sovereignty. With Hong Kong as a Special

¹⁰ Luther, *Vorlesungen über Mose*, WA, 42, 334, 12.

¹¹ H. Denzinger-A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, No. 3073, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1965.

¹² *Ibid.*, No. 3059-3060.

Administration Region, hopefully changes can be minimal while prosperity and stability prevail. Though the date is still more than a decade away, changes have already begun.

At this historic moment, we see God at work in His church. Christians are awakened by the political situation to reflect more seriously on the meaning of their faith, to long for a deeper spirituality, to be more sensitive to the social responsibility and to search for more valid church models. The lost art of fasting and prayer is once again rediscovered. An unprecedented spirit of unity among the evangelicals is well on the way.

Also at this juncture the TEE department of China Graduate School of Theology (CGST) is launching a new adventure, Jifu. Jifu is the Chinese abbreviation for Theological Training for Ministry among the Basic Stratum. Basic stratum denotes the lower class without any negative connotation. In Hong Kong the great bulk of the population belongs to the basic stratum, which by and large remains outside the church. Jifu is part of a movement to capture this huge territory that the sovereignty of God may prevail among the mass there.

THE BLUE COLLAR GAP

The birth of Jifu is not accidental. It is a response to a long standing need. To keep up with the educational trend of a growing metropolis, which is becoming more and more sophisticated and international, Bible colleges and seminaries in Hong Kong strive to upgrade their academic standard by recruiting more qualified teachers, expanding their libraries and raising their entrance requirement. Also new institutions are created to meet the need. CGST was established to train a new breed of Christian workers from university graduates. The trend to capture the well-educated for Christian service is a correct and necessary strategy. However, it leaves a sizeable gap in theological training. While theological schools focus their attention on the **P. 366** winners in the secular school system, on those who succeed in passing countless examinations, a large group of Christians are left out of the picture.

Can a dedicated factory girl, called by God, ever expect to enter the gate of a Bible college? She may be twenty-five years old now. In her early teens she dropped out of school to earn her livelihood and has already worked for more than ten years. To make up her deficiency and to aim for a high school leaving certificate is asking too much of her. Her dilemma is a trying counselling case for pastors. What is the way out? If God has called dedicated Christians among the working class, why isn't there a single theological school to equip them? Is their call mistaken? Or, is there something missing in the setup? Are we partial? Is our attention on the elite too narrow a definition for 'the best for the Lord'? Can we ignore those whom God chooses to call to enter into the ministry? God certainly has a special regard for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized.

At present, the theological schools tend to operate with expressions of spirituality most congenial to the middle class. Even if a worker enrolled in one of them, after three or four years of campus life, his or her lifestyle would probably have been assimilated by the dominant mode, and it would be quite an adjustment to live with one's people again.

We can trace this phenomenon back to the church situation, which in turn reflects the value and structure of the society.

UNJUST SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Hong Kong government statistics show that in September 1980 among 5,067,900 inhabitants, the working force consists of 2,370,700 persons, two thirds of them being male. Half of the active working adults have only primary education. Two fifths of them

are in factory or transportation, working 49 hours a week on the average. Their median monthly income is HK\$1,380 and one fourth of them earns less than HK\$1,000 a month.

The industrial workers have contributed enormously towards the prosperity and development of Hong Kong, whereas their earning is hardly commensurate with their contribution. There lacks a strong union to fight for their benefits. There is no social security. They may work for a whole life but retire without pension. Some of them are ignorant of their minimal rights such as compensation for injury, severance payment, or regulations concerning sick leave or paid holidays. If there is ever a means, be it gambling or hard working or p. 367 starting one's own business, they would gladly rid themselves of the stigma and get to a more advantageous rung on the social ladder. Unfortunately, the church happens to side with the status quo in her practice and belittle the workers.

In a poignant article, entitled 'Another circumcision',¹ Ms. Agnes Lau points out that advocating reading more devotional books and attending various courses as telltale for spiritual zeal, forbidding T-shirt or blue jeans at Sunday service, promoting classical music instead of popular songs, singing hymns in English, all amount to imposing a different sub-culture upon the blue collar Christians. Besides, these Christians are consistently put in inferior roles. They are expected to be led instead of leading, to be taught instead of teaching. Thus in withholding opportunities for theological education from blue collar Christians, the church is further impoverishing them.

BIASED EDUCATION SYSTEM

In a society, the rich often get richer, the poor get poorer. Such a vicious cycle is equally true for education. The school system is part and parcel of the power structure. Ivan Illich² even regards school as an oppressive system, maintaining the world view of the ruling group, creating a false demand and selling useless commodities to the crowd and instigating the mass to aspire after designated goods while condemning them to be failures in the competitive system. Within the system, the working class not only has a smaller slice of the pie as far as income, housing situation, recreational facilities are concerned; its access to educational resources is also less favourable. A noisy and crowded home, illiterate or barely educated parents and financial pressure to quit school, all work against keen competition in the school system. The poor children are losers not because they are less intelligent but because of their handicaps in developing the academic potentials.

Thus far both the church and theological schools tend to value the better educated. Also, for the past twenty-some years various groups such as the Fellowship of Evangelical Studies, Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ have done good work among the high schoolers and the students. Thus the church has a high percentage of students and professionals. As a result, factory workers in the church would feel p. 368 both inferior and weak in number. It is very understandable that theological schools should forget to set up specific training for this minority group of believers.

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

¹ *Vision, Strategy and Involvement* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Industrial Evangelistic Fellowship, 1981), p. 16-17.

² *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

In God's grace, we witness a gradual turning of the tide. In 1972, when the number of industrial workers rose rapidly and reached .6 million, God placed the burden of evangelization upon a group of graduates from Hong Kong Technical College and they started the Industrial Evangelistic Fellowship. After numerous difficulties, it has grown to twenty co-workers. A few churches began to start workers' fellowships. Some launched out mission work in industrialized areas and experimented with new forms of programme and worship to suit the life style of the lower class. Another movement among the lower class, Wu Oi Christian Fellowship, was started in 1973. Its aim is to help drug addicts experience the power of the gospel and become new persons in Christ. In God's grace, a decade of hard work has produced wonderful fruit.

All these endeavours prepared the ground for establishing a theological training programme to further equip those dedicated converts from the lower class. Seeing the wisdom of the apostles in selecting seven gifted Hellenist Christians to serve Hellenist Christians ([Acts 6](#)), we believe that the best evangelists for the industrial workers should come from their midst. An outsider can hardly serve as an equal substitute.

Before describing Jifu, we would like to give a brief outline of its development.

FIELD EDUCATION

Since Jifu is to train dedicated working class Christians to become pastors, evangelists and teachers among their own people, it must be a practical, well planned professional training.

Unfortunately, seminary transcripts often reflect a low priority of field work in the curriculum as compared to the various course work. In some schools, students even regard field work more as a source of income to help out with the educational expenses while the church regards it as a type of cheap labour to make up for the shortage of staff. Thus theological training may end up producing pastors who are stuffed with theory and knowledge but ill-prepared to minister in the living context to real people. Such degradation of field education is indeed tragic. p. 369

The working class are people of action. They use their muscle more than their brain. They are strong in practice but slim in theory. Intellectualism, abstract thinking and conceptual gymnastics as characteristics of much theological training are quite alien to their lifestyle.³ This is why what the church can offer seems to miss their wavelength.

To ensure Jifu to be practical and well adapted to the working class, we put much emphasis on field education, which amounts to some 40% of the total training time. The aim of field education is fourfold: to let the students maintain close contact with their own people, to reflect critically upon their past experience in the lower stratum of the society, to have fresh materials to stimulate their theological thinking, to apply their faith and discover their own gifts while serving.

We stress the learning aspect and demand no remuneration from the field work locale. The students are there first of all to learn. Each student has two supervisors, one from the field and one from the school. He has to write a weekly report and meet each of his supervisors for an hour-long consultation twice a month. In the field work, concrete guide lines are given and appropriate plans made to learn the characteristics and techniques of the specific assignment. The student is encouraged to contact people of different age and sex, to think critically over the existing models of evangelization and service and to find out new mission models. He is to learn how to communicate the gospel by word and by

³ cf. F. Reissman, 'There is more than One Style for Learning' in D. E. Harmachek, ed., *Human Dynamics in Psychology and Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacin, 1977), 13-17.

deed and to build up a believing community oriented towards mission. Even though the existing ministries toward the working class are scanty, we restrict ourselves to these places and include a small number of significant non-Christian organizations where the learning is highly valuable.

Among the eleven quarters, the field education is carried out in five different formats.

Format A: The first two quarters are designated for acquainting oneself with the field and learning some necessary fieldwork techniques. The students are to visit worker ministries, community centres, churches and specialized ministries such as drug addict rehabilitation and prison work that they may be well informed to select fields of their interest for the later quarters when they actually go and learn by doing. They also have class work to learn observation, listening skill, programme co-ordination, games and activities.

Format B: This takes up the third, fifth and sixth quarters. With the [p. 370](#) exposure obtained in the first two quarters, the students are now to choose two fields to engage in half time field work. This is followed by Format C, quarter four and seven, where he is fully engaged in the field. In such internship he is not parachuting, only appearing at very restricted time slots but has a more in depth involvement.

Format D: This is a quarter back to one's home church. In the seventh quarter, the student is to spend two days a week in his home church, to work under the tutelage of his pastor to renew the fellowship and to share with the members the vision of ministry among the working class.

Format E: This takes up the last three quarters where students work in twos and threes at churches and organizations to set up new work towards the working class. For our first class of students, this includes a church wanting to set up a daughter church in a lower income area, another two churches with existing senior citizens and youth centres respectively and planning to start Sunday services, a youth centre with a new project to reach the marginal youths, the squatter evangelistic fellowship, which was established just a year ago, a church located in the industrial area wanting to extend its ministry and a church planning to strengthen its evangelistic work in a temporary housing area. It is a training for frontier and pioneering work because the lower class is by and large a mission field. One must go out to gather a group and create a community.

COURSE WORK

There are thirty required courses. Each meets three hours a week for nine to ten weeks. Approximately one third are devoted to Biblical studies, one fifth to theology and church history, one fifth to practical subjects, one tenth to understanding the social milieu of the working class and one sixth to communication competence. The above division is very rough because we try hard to integrate different disciplines. Theological studies can become a bunch of disconnected specialized studies left to the students to put together. However, such a practice can very much frustrate the worker class Christians. In each course, the teachers not only relate to their background and draw on their experiences but also relate to the content of other courses. After all, in the field different areas of knowledge are put to work simultaneously. So such training should start early. What is unique about the courses hides beneath the rather non-striking course titles.

About half of the courses are taught by CGST's full time staff, half by guest teachers. This is the way to utilize top practitioners in the field, [p. 371](#) those evangelizing the industrial workers, pastoring workers' church, in charge of workers' community centres etc. A full time staff can easily be domesticated by the seminary campus and lose touch with the hustling world. Such a mix of full time staff and guest teachers makes the training

up-to-date, practical and contextual. We believe this to be a way to take the contemporary context seriously that the message of the scripture can come alive here and now.⁴ Since each weekly session is three hours long, this almost forces the teacher to be innovative and not rely solely on lecturing. Actually, workers' life is monotonous. Therefore in their spare time, they like relaxation and recreation. They are not used to long lectures but are fond of drama, role play, simulation and dialogue. Teachers try to discover and adapt to their learning style. No wonder the classroom is sometimes noisy and full of various activities. Individual competition is played down, whereas numerous opportunities for group discussion and group projects are provided to suit and promote their sense of comradeship.⁵

Usually theological education is very expensive. Jifu does not want to give cheap education. We maintain quality training but avoid investment in reality. Most church halls are empty during the weekdays, especially in the mornings and they serve well as Jifu class rooms. We contact churches sympathetic to Jifu and centrally located or close to industrial areas. By going to different churches for class, sometimes five different ones a week, students get a feel of different areas and become acquainted with different churches. This itself is part of education.

DISCIPLING GROUPS

Students are divided into groups of six to eight. Each week there is a time for sharing, discussion and prayer. Occasionally they would have an outing or a film. This helps to bring teacher and students close to one another, while providing a time to discuss problems of study, family and field education. About twice a quarter the group meet together for special talks on subjects such as nutrition, stress and mental health, church growth, self-image etc. There are four-day camps after each quarter to give a break to the strenuous training **P. 372** programme. It may be a work camp, a meditation camp or an activity camp. In addition, teachers will meet with students once or twice a quarter for longer time of counseling. One characteristic of the students is inferiority complex. They are failures in the light of prevalent values. They do not have much schooling. Their job prospects are limited. They lack social prestige or financial muscle. Jifu as a kind of adult education that gives them a second chance must help them to overcome their handicaps and release their potential.

The students commute during the first one or two years in order not to be out of touch with their living environment, but before graduation the single students will also have opportunity to live in the dormitory. They practise pooling together their money for meals and transportation connected with the training programme. That is no easy lesson to learn.

CONCLUSION

Reviewing the development of Jifu, we witness quite a few encouraging signs. The support from local churches has increased steadily. The average age of the second class is older, with more married students. This means Jifu is attracting more mature students who are

⁴ René Padilla, 'Hermeneutics and Culture—A Theological Perspective', in R. T. Coote and J. R. W. Stott, eds., *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 63–78.

⁵ R. M. Smith, *Learning How to Learn in Adult Education* (Dekalb, Illinois: ERIC Clearing House in Adult Education, 1976), L. E. Coleman, 'Simulation Games in Seminary Instruction', *Theological Education* 9 (1973) 141–47.

taking a higher risk than younger ones in pursuing a different course in life. By being part of CGST, Jifu has made the students and faculty more aware of the need of the basic stratum. Some graduates have joined ministries in this area. At this initial stage, we are expanding slowly and only accept students every other year. We look forward to the time when we can start a new class every year. We also look beyond and anticipate a more advanced level of training or continuing education for the graduates. Even before 1997, we believe that by God's grace much can be accomplished. **P. 373**

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Book Reviews

Helmut Thielicke, *Being Human ... Becoming Human*

Review by Harry Boonstra

F. Ross Kinsler (Ed.), *Church Education*

Review by Thomas Hanks

Stanley N. Gundry & Alan F. Johnson, *Theology and History*

Review by Clark H. Pinnock