

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MISSION BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES

BISHOPS – MISSIONARIES

ID#

127

**LACY, BISHOP G. CARLETON
PICTURES AND WRITINGS**

W. W. Reid
Board of Missions and Church Extension
of the Methodist Church
150 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, N.Y.

Why the Missionaries Stay in China

By Bishop Carlton Lacy
Foochow, China

(Editor's Note: Bishop Lacy is now on a brief official visit to the United States, but will be returning to China in a few weeks.)

It is the conviction of the great majority of missionaries and of Chinese Christian leaders in that land that the need for missionary work and the opportunity for service among the people were never greater than today. And the missionaries are determined to stay in China so long as they can make a Christian witness. Whether the government is friendly or hostile, the missionaries feel impelled to give their witness. In the past, despite all the ups and downs in China's history, the Christians have never been long deterred from preaching by any government in power, and we must not anticipate any different condition under a Communist regime.

At the present time, the Christian missionaries can and do carry on their varied ministries of healing, preaching, and teaching under the Communists as under the Nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek. The Board of Missions and Church Extension is able to get funds into the hands of missionaries. The missionaries see increasing opportunities for service -- and these they are meeting with all the strength and devotion that is theirs.

Some of our friends say, "We can see the Communist pattern of conquest and control in what is now taking place in China." But that is too broad an assumption. Actually no overall or common pattern of Communist occupation plan or policy is

visible as yet across the areas now controlled by the new armies and civilian rulers. Nor can we assume that any pattern in one city or province today will be the pattern that will continue through the months and years, or that will prevail in any other area. No, the pattern of Communist control is not set in China; for one thing, the new government of Communists have not occupied any part of China long enough for any pattern to set. Certainly until conditions are more settled and defined, until one knows for a certainty what they are to be, and while one may have a hand in the actual making of a pattern, the missionary should not withdraw, should not abandon the work he has established and the people he has drawn into the Christian community.

There are wide differences of opinion, too, as to whether or not we can assume anything concerning Communism and its actions in China from a study of Communism in Europe. The tempers of the peoples of Europe and of China must be taken into account; Communism may "take" very differently among widely differing peoples, and it may be molded into quite differing expressions and programs. Yet I do not agree with those who say that "Communism in China is only an agrarian revolt and is not Marxist Communism." That, I believe, is a false and dangerous assumption. Everything seems to point to the fact that Communism in China has benefitted through the years by the international organization and international support of Communist leaders. Russia and her Soviet leaders have an interest and a stake in all that is going on in China these days.

In the long run -- I mean over a period of, say, twenty-five years -- Communism will, I am sure, find it impossible to completely organize China on a totalitarian basis. Meanwhile any Communist pattern or program that is developing will be greatly modified on the basis of reality and possibility. The Chinese are, at heart, a democratic people and cannot well be regimented. They have a horror of government from outside, and even a fear of a central government from within their own nation. Remember how long they bent under the government of the foreign Manchus, yet never really accepted nor absorbed them, and finally overthrew them. They may bend a

while to Communism, they may even take something of value out of the Communist page, but I believe China will never become totalitarian: that would be contrary to the characteristic philosophy deep-grained in the whole people.

The "man on the road" in China -- the man who does not read, whose knowledge ranges little farther than the needs of his immediate town and occupation -- thinks of Communism -- may even welcome it -- as a possible release from long years of war, from high prices and soaring inflation, and as merely the transfer from one party to another, a situation he has before experienced. He does not dread it, as does America, as a complete shift of life philosophies; and in fact, it will probably prove much less a complete change of life in an agricultural land like China than in a highly-industrialized nation. On the other hand, in Fukien Province, where we had a taste of Communism some fifteen years ago, the people have no desire to have these experiences repeated. The educated people in China -- those who read about Communism, who have some wealth, who may have travelled and seen Communism in action -- are divided in their reactions toward it: some fear it and flee before it, while others hail it as the long-sought Utopia.

Some of us recall vividly the consternation with which missionaries and others viewed the coming into power of the present Nationalist Government of China in 1925. For a time many schools were closed; church services were suspended; some missionaries were compelled to leave their old centers of service. But the Christian church and the Chinese Christians weathered the storm; some adjustments of programs were made; and Christianity came back into a place of even higher regard and greater usefulness among the nation's millions.

I know there are those who say, "Things are different this time; this is not a Chinese uprising, this is backed by Moscow." But I am sure if we all hold on and stand by the Christian people and by our faith, we will find ways to make our Christian witness: we may even be on the threshold of a greater opportunity for Christian service and advance in China. I am in full accord with Bishop Kaung's

statement, "The only reason we are here and must stay here is so that Christians can prove to the world the power of Christ in the lives of people no matter what are the conditions of government or of economic life."

My Chinese friends tell me that China can never solve her problems until Russia, and the United States of America, and the other nations of the earth get together and resolve their relationships. Meanwhile international Communism will go marching on -- from China to Indo-China and Malaya, then perhaps to India. But these differences can be solved, and it is for that reason I welcome every effort made to have these great nations sit down together to make world understanding and world peace. That is why I do not believe in America's sending ammunition, or military technicians, or armies themselves into China, as some advocate, to halt the Communists. I am not as fearful of them as are some -- but I do want efforts made for international understanding. That would be the best service anyone could render China.

So the missionaries carry on in China. And the Chinese Christian leaders want them there, ask them to stay. Far from thinking the presence of missionaries will "embarrass" Chinese Christians if and when the Communists are in control, these leaders say, "You and we must continue in this Christian enterprise as partners. We do not want a national Christian church in China; we want an ecumenical church, we want to be part of a worldwide Christian fellowship. Your presence gives us that status."

W. W. Reid
Board of Missions and Church Extension
of the Methodist Church
150 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, N.Y.

JUL 11 1950

Relief Goes Out to Foochow

By Bishop Carleton Lacy,
Foochow, Fukien, China

Over all of Foochow -- which had promised to be beautiful on the anticipated morning of Easter -- there was thrown a dark pall.

As I went to meet the sunrise in a service on the campus of the Theological College, I faced a huge cloud of smoke climbing high and throwing big cinders and charred embers all over our hillside. Across the river several city blocks were burning; thousands of people were made homeless. When I crossed the bridge after dinner, I found several of them already beginning to erect shanties amid the hot bricks and broken tile, and others pathetically gathering half-burned timbers, or salvaging whatever remnants they could find of their possessions. Among them were a few of our church members who lost everything. Fortunately our Relief Committee was able to help a little with old clothes and bedding and a few loads of rice provided by the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief. Local Christians contributed generously.

Many hours have been spent recently trying to make careful, fair and where possible, productive distribution of relief. During the war when congregations were scattered and institutions almost demolished M.C.O.R. really held our work together. Lately we have been deluged with appeals for medical aid, relief for victims of famine, fire or flood, or others suffering from the desperate conditions into which much of the country has deteriorated. Let me give you some notes from just one typical meeting of the Relief Committee which has to convene too often.

"The following grants were approved for individuals: A Catholic Church member, 50 Catties of rice; explain that further appeals if necessary must be made through his own church..... Foochow City bombing raid victims; 180 catties through the Fukien Christian Council for distribution..... Guong-nguong-die church member in Union Hospital; to be provided for from a special WDCS fund..... Haitang Church member: leg amputation due to infection from exploding bomb, requires long hospitalization; 320 catties of rice..... U.B.L's daughter, mentally deranged; hospital no facilities. Agreed to pay hospital bill for one more month until father (preacher) can make other arrangements..... Song-giang Church member, dying at 78. Long, faithful voluntary church service; now destitute; 320 catties for final illness and burial..... Two Kutien widows, destitute, each with two children; 160 and 200 catties respectively, and some clothing..... Bingtang family; completely robbed by bandits. 16 pieces of clothing..... Four orphans; jobless; 100 catties each and study what can be done.... Other cases referred to pastors for further investigation..... Special grants of clothing and bedding to Deaf-Mute School, Kutien."

Larger grants were made to the hospitals for charity work, to pay part of the hospital bills of employed church workers, to provide tuition fees for needy students in our schools, and -- a new item -- for "constructive relief through the Five-Years Advance Committee."

As an illustration of what this committee is trying to do, take Bingtang. This is a sandy island where wood is so scarce the telephone poles are long slabs of rough stone. Fishing has been a chief industry. Last summer's fighting destroyed or cost through commandeering many of the fishing boats. With them went many nets. Rehabilitation of these fishermen sometimes calls for contributing a share to build a new boat, sometimes a little cash to buy cord for fish nets, or to help start a net-weaving cooperative.

Near Futsing some church members begged for a cow for planting the rice fields. Land-owners' cows had all been sold to pay rice levies. If they could get this help toward their spring planting it might enable them to continue their share of support for the resident bible woman.

W. W. Reid
Board of Missions and Church Extension
of the Methodist Church
150 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, N.Y.

APR 29 1947

China Plans Centennial Celebration

By ~~Bishop Carleton Lacy~~
~~Foochow, China~~

Methodist churches in China held a service of thanksgiving on April 13 for the consecration and vision that sent Judson Collins and the Rev. and Mrs. Moses White to sail from Boston on April 15, 1847. We are hoping that the churches of the South China Area will make a thankoffering of five million dollars, (Chinese), and that other parts of the country will do as well. Those churches that find it impracticable to observe this date will plan to have their thankoffering on the first Sunday in September, as it was Sept. 4 that these first missionaries landed in Foochow.

The Central Conference Centennial Celebration is to be held in Foochow beginning on November 15th. That will be followed by a series of evangelistic campaigns in most of the larger cities where the Methodist Church has been planted. The effort will be directed toward reaching those persons who in our homes, schools, and other church institutions have come into contact with Christianity, without making a personal commitment of life to Christ. On these gospel teams we hope to have several of our distinguished church leaders from America paired with such Chinese leaders as Bishops Kaung and Chen, and other laymen and preachers. The plan calls for three months with these teams before they leave for General Conference, then a period of more intensive work by the local churches, and another three months' period of Gospel Team work in the fall of 1948 before we reach the climax of the program. This all demands a lot of hard work and a volume of prayer.

Recently in Foochow we had an interdenominational retreat for church workers from all parts of northern Fukien. The purpose was to prepare for a wider, more definite evangelistic program in cooperation with the National Christian Council's three

years' Forward Evangelistic Movement (of which Bishop Chen is Executive Secretary and Bishop Ward is chairman of the Committee). For four days about eighty men and women from selected churches in all districts considered the opportunities and challenge in varied avenues of work.

Dr. Harold Brewster presented the evangelistic opportunities offered in a public health program. Mr. Liu Yan-fen, business manager of the Pierce Memorial Union Hospital, thrilled us with his stories of how Christ has come to the patients in the clinic and wards (especially memorable was his account of how a communist school principal found Christ and accepted Christianity). Mr. Lin Tien-an, a theological student who is president of the North Fukien Student Christian Union, told of the activities of the Christian Fellowship Groups in the government colleges and middle schools. And Principal Lin Kuan-pin told from his own experiences in the Rural Vocational High School of recruiting youth for the ministry (there is in his school a student volunteer band of nearly thirty boys).

To my mind the outstanding address was made by Hwang Pei-yung, the student secretary of our Foochow Y.M.C.A. He spoke of the unprecedented interest of students in Christianity, due probably to recent suffering and their disappointment in science, communism and international relationships to which they had attached high hopes. Now they are inquiring whether Christianity either personally or socially can offer a way out. He mentioned two extremes in the type of religion to which many are turning: on the one hand an other-worldliness which sees no hope except in the Heaven to come; on the other hand a humanistic ethics which expects salvation of the world through man's efforts to follow the example and teaching of Jesus. He called for an evangelistic presentation of the gospel that will relate spiritual resources to the personal and economic needs of a distraught society.

Popular comment among the delegates showed most interest to have been aroused by a report by Chen Chungsing on the work he has been directing from our office in newspaper evangelism. He told of the responses that have come in letters from all over the Province, from all sorts of people, and of how he has tried to meet their needs by sending Gospels and other literature and letters, and by directing their

-3-

inquiries to nearby churches. The main comments in the discussion period that followed indicated a conviction that there is opening here a big field of evangelistic opportunity that has hardly been touched in China.

----- 47 -----

Richard [unclear]
[unclear]

APR 2 1936

THE
EPISCOPAL
CONFERENCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA
1936

JESUS FOR CHINESE YOUTH

by

CARLETON LACY

Foreword

This little essay is a very personal document. It was written with no thought of publication, intended for very few eyes to scan. It has assumed its present form through the insistence of a few friends who were kind enough to make suggestions for improvement of the original draft.

In the spring of 1937 the writer returned from China for a brief furlough after more than twenty years of missionary service. The fires of spiritual and intellectual life were burning low. Jesus was not so personally real nor dynamic as He had once been. The currents of thought and national life tended to be confusing. Some of his former students had been killed as revolutionists; others had served jail terms as Communist agitators. He had spent hours with these and others who were enthusiastic for their cause but rejected Christianity.

He faced a double necessity—the rekindling of his own religious experience and conviction; and the restating of his faith in terms that would be relevant and comprehensible to those among whom he felt called to serve. Toward that end he entered a few classes in Union Theological Seminary and the Department of Christian Education in Teachers' College, Columbia University. As a part of the requirement in those courses he undertook this re-statement of his own convictions in terms that might be appropriate to Chinese thought.

Grateful acknowledgment is due to Professor Mary Ely Lyman of Union Theological Seminary, to Professor H. Richard Niebuhr of Yale Divinity School, and Professor Adelaide M. Case of Teachers' College, Columbia University, for the inspiration of their courses and the personal help and encouragement so generously given; to Mr. Y. T. Wu for his friendly suggestions and for his illuminating writing from which numerous quotations have been made; to Mrs. Henriette Stivers and my son Creighton Lacy who typed the manuscripts; and to those many writers whose books have contributed directly or indirectly to the reshaping of thoughts as herein set down. With such helpers a few weeks of summer study have been a delightful, rewarding experience.

In publishing this essay in "The Chinese Recorder" several foot-notes and illustrations have been omitted.

Jesus for Chinese Youth

CARLETON LACY

WHAT relevance has Jesus for youth in China today? That is the fundamental question with which the Protestant Christian missionary must deal. Foreign Mission Boards have defined their task in terms of establishing the Church or of proclaiming a Gospel. For more than a century its missionaries have been engaged in preaching the accepted doctrines of Evangelical Protestantism, in establishing ecclesiastical institutions or those of learning and philanthropy, in translating and scattering the scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments with a heterogeneous accompaniment of literary exposition and homilies, and in endeavoring in many ways to interpret the Christian message in terms of social service and ethical relationships. During much of this period one or another of these tasks has been unique and has tended to characterize or to justify the Christian Movement. Christianity has been accepted as the advocate and exponent and outward thrust of a desirable type of civilization, or of an expression of a successful philosophy, or as an instrument of human welfare, superior to any other apparent at the time.

Now a new world situation has been brought about, through forces and events that need not be listed here. New religious and social or economic and political philosophies contend for the field. A wider intermingling around the world of institutions and processes and concepts has taken place, so that everyone and everything is challenged for its credentials or its password. And Protestant Christianity, as it looks at itself and at its allies or competitors or antagonists, as it faces the field and the people to whom it has felt itself constrained to go, finds its only watchword to be "Jesus Christ."

Philosophies Ancient and Modern

The central and dominant theme of Chinese philosophy may be summarized in the one word Harmony. There has always been a deep appreciation of the oneness of the Universe—shall we say a recognition of the sacredness of all creation. There was no hard line drawn between animate and inanimate, between material and spiritual existence. While some interpreters have been inclined therein to see a type of pantheism, it is rather a highly developed expression of what our more modern phraseology has termed 'the value of the all' as being the work of the Creator. All Chinese art expresses this idea. Mountains and streams and waterfalls, rocks and dead tree-trunks and clouds are as much the theme of Chinese art as ever was the human form in Greek art. Some Chinese have wondered at the predominance given to the human body in western painting and sculpture; yet it has by no means been excluded in the work of the Chinese artist. Rather it has become an incidental, a natural part of the whole picture. The philosopher sitting under his hut or besides the bridge contemplating the glories of mountain peak and falling water is not the central feature of such a picture, but

is part and parcel of the whole. The scene upon which he gazes is not the object of his contemplation so much as it is the theme of the artist's design; and he is an integral part of that theme and design. So in Chinese philosophy we have what we now recognize to be an essential element of the Christian ethic—the sacredness of all creation. As Francis of Assisi finds the rocks and the birds and the stars his brothers and sisters in the family of God, so the Chinese philosopher identifies himself with waterfall and mountain crag and toiling buffalo or the almond blossom as a part of the universe—the created whole. In thought the Creator is not so dominant as is the work of his hand, but the unity, the harmony of all the universe, is the fundamental concept.

Against that background of thought have arisen the new economic and political movements which have swept across the country during the last two decades. For some years the claims of Communism and of Nationalism have commanded the interest and largely the loyalty of Chinese youth. This has been due on the one hand to the age-old Chinese philosophy and on the other to recent world trends which have held out these two avenues of escape to a nation suffering desperately from internal woes and external foes. The old philosophy of the sages which has woven the social fabric of China had little place for the glorification of the individual and the emphasis upon personality which has characterized Protestant Christian preaching and nineteenth century capitalism. The individual is a part of the universe, and his supreme effort must ever be to fit into the harmony of society and of creation. With the impact of western industrialism and capitalistic trade China has experienced a rapid development of individualism, the accumulation of individual wealth at the expense of the shared family fortunes, and the exploitation of an ever-growing labor class. As a protest against this tendency the Communistic movement found sympathy with the student group whose early education was saturated with this old philosophy.

To be sure, there were political aspects of the situation which complicated matters and contributed mixed motives to the support of Communism. There was an intimate relationship here to the growth of nationalism. At first sight nationalism may seem to be utterly contrary to the early Chinese philosophy, except so far as it is a protest against the individualism already mentioned. Indeed missionaries of Christianity during several decades of their propaganda felt called upon to seek a remedy to this that seemed to them a defect in the Chinese consciousness. By many an ardent western Christian missionary the apparent lack of patriotism or national loyalty among his Chinese students was regarded as a cause for serious concern which called forth deliberate efforts for remedial instruction and excitation. So the whole educational system as introduced by the missionaries, and later developed by the products of their schools or colleges and universities in the countries from which they came, has fostered the growth of nationalism.

No less potent were the contacts with western nations which in every possible way pushed China toward a strong nationalism both as a natural reaction, as a means of self-preservation, and in deliberate emulation of those forces which appeared elsewhere in the world to demonstrate their success.

When we study the growth of the totalitarian state and the attendant loss of personal rights and of the opportunity for self-expression, we begin to realize that after all there was in the early Chinese philosophy a strong strain that prepared the soil for the germination of a vehement nationalism, as truly as it was prepared for the Communist seed. There is no essential difference between Nationalism and Communism in the place of the individual. That the Chinese emphasized the harmonious oneness of the universe was true largely in the ignoring of that part of the universe which lay outside their immediate experience. Whatever the abstract philosophy, the political philosophy called for the preservation of harmony through the adjustment of all "outside" races and people to the position of the "Middle Kingdom" which sustained a sort of central relation to the Universe. So, after all, both of these modern systems which have seemed so new, and which have so thoroughly established other values as higher than that of the individual—Communism and Nationalism—are far from exotic, and it is not strange that they have captured a tremendous following from the youth of China. Each is embraced as the deliverer from very evident and very pressing disaster, and no system of thought, no ethic nor religion nor political philosophy, can gain headway unless it can meet the claim of these competitors or antagonists and offer a surer way to national and personal salvation.

Various Christian Emphases

This was a situation that the Protestant propaganda of earlier decades did not have to face. Nineteenth century Evangelical Christianity was essentially a dogma, a system of doctrine. Its protagonists addressed themselves primarily to an attack upon the shortcomings and evils in other religious systems which they encountered and in the preaching of individual morality. At a later stage the so-called "practical expression of Christianity" was pushed forward in service to the needy, in educational institutions, in the care of the sick and the blind, the lepers and orphans. The earlier motive of saving souls through these agencies—the offering of tonsillectomy as a bait for catching and curing a diseased soul—gradually gave way to the philanthropic motive or that of expressing Christian love. (It was apparently to the establishment of this latter position that the "Laymen's Inquiry" addressed most of their recommendations.)

Presently the religious education experts led on to another stage in the Protestant Christian program; everywhere the youth of China was being gathered into discussion groups for the consideration of ethical problems and the application of Christian ethical ideals. War

and Pacifism, Inter-racial Goodwill, Community Welfare, Stewardship of Property—these and scores of other "problems of ethics" were offered the young people. It was pointed out that the right solution of these problems was fundamental to the Christian way of life, and Christianity came to be considered not as a doctrine nor as an expression of social service but as a code of social ethics.

Of course at each of these stages Christianity has been held up for comparison. On the one hand there was comparison with what it was attempting to supplant or supplement; on the other hand there was comparison with the actual situation which it claimed to represent.

Too often one's ethical practice or that of his group failed to measure up to his preaching or to demonstrate its superiority; and the multiplicity of creeds and sects confused any claim for a unique doctrinal message.

In the face of such a dilemma what position is possible? Does the whole missionary program of Christianity become impotent, impossible? Well, sometimes. One is almost forced to the position of being a silent witness to some inner experience, hoping against hope that some light may shine through the darkness, that some bit of love may touch another life. He may hope and pray and strive so to live that sometime somewhere someone may notice a little "difference" that is attractive enough to cause him to stop and consider and perhaps to inquire as to its meaning and its source. Then he will point to the person of Jesus; and the more courageous will proclaim the watchword, "Jesus Christ." That witness, both for the timid and the bold, must be sustained by the conviction of the relevance of Jesus for the youth of today.

The Jesus of the Gospels

There is something almost naively simple and beautiful and compelling to Chinese youth in the gospel picture of Jesus. It comes to him with a freshness and a directness that has been lost in the West through its familiarity and even more through the traditions and controversies that have grown up about it. The oriental youth is no more credulous than his occidental schoolmate, but the incidents that have bulked so large in our study of the life of Jesus are recognized by him at once as incidentals. So they do not get in his way and dim the portrait.

Many westerners cannot deal with the life of Jesus, or the gospel narratives, without stopping to explain, in all manner of ways, the miracles which they do not and cannot accept as factual. To be sure these problems and difficulties occur to the Chinese student. In fact teachers of Bible and religion in the Christian Colleges of China have made much of these obstacles, and have been at some pains to present the findings of the latest critical scholarship or to rewrite the gospel narrative in its earliest "purest" forms, to remove these

obstacles from those to whom they would like to present an unwarped picture of the historic Jesus.

Through their scholarship and their intimate understanding of the mind and the intellectual problems of those with whom they are working these teachers have rendered large service. Yet it may be suggested that they tend to magnify or intensify their own difficulties and transfer them or impute them to their students. In the nature of Chinese thought and environment the presence of the miracle stories is not unnatural. Even when the miraculous is denied or repudiated by a Chinese student the presence and form of these stories do not destroy the validity of the narrative nor mar the picture of the historic Jesus. The critical student easily recognizes them as readily acquired additions or naturally provided explanations such as creep into any early records. He is not inhibited in his thought of them by church tradition, by the ecclesiastical controversies of the ages, nor by the more binding influence of early home teaching and loyalty to the convictions of parents and elders. The uncritical youth, on the other hand, finds in these narratives a perfectly normal portrayal of such incidents as are constantly occurring all about him and are accepted without psychological or physiological explanation.

Readers who long have been familiar with the gospel narrative often fail to appreciate how beautifully and clearly the person of Jesus has therein been set forth. A Chinese scholar who was interested in the literary movement and made no profession of Christianity exclaimed, "The story of Jesus and the woman who wept at his feet and wiped off the tears with her hair is the most beautiful story that has ever been written. It is so touching, so tender and so true."¹

Y. T. Wu begins his statement of "My Conception of the Universe and of Life since I Knew Jesus" with this statement: "It was about eleven years ago... that I read for the first time in my life the Sermon on the Mount. After I had read it, my inner being seemed suddenly to be flooded with light, and my heart was filled with unusual happiness... every word in those three chapters spoke to me with a mighty force and was etched deep in my heart. At the same time I caught between the lines a glimpse of the speaker; that visage, its hardness mingled with courage and dignity, was the very incarnation of love. This speaker's personality seemed to bore its way into the core of my being; and tears suddenly burst from my eyes. Remorse for the past, consolation for the present, hope for the future, in that single instant seemed all to well up in my heart, and as though perturbed by magic, I fell on my knees and cried out to that shining figure: 'Lord, thou art my Saviour!'"²

What a thousand pities it would have been if, in the interests of 'scholarship' and the desire to present the simple, unadorned picture of the Jesus of history, this young man had been handed

1. *The Christian Century*, June 30, 1927. "The Orient Reconsiders Christianity"—by Y. T. Wu.

2. "The Jesus I Know"—page 18.

instead of Matthew's gospel one of these modern, abridged students' stories of Jesus! The literary embellishments from Matthew's poetical pen, recasting and adorning the simple form of the Galilean teacher's words, were no umbrage to hide the face or cloud the character of the Man Jesus, but rather a well-chosen frame to heighten the majesty of that figure. Thus it is that Jesus speaks through the pages of the Gospels to the Youth of China.

That does not imply that there is no recognition of the problems with which biblical scholars in other lands have wrestled so earnestly. Chinese scholars already have shown themselves as keen as others to separate interpretation from statement of fact or original statement. They are just as eager to sort out the true and the imaginary in the gospel narrative. They will talk of these matters as seriously as anyone, and will deal with them free from the prejudices and traditions that have beset and bound students in other lands. In fact they have been a bit impatient with what they regard as the distortion of the picture of Jesus as brought from abroad, and have been slow to discover how next to impossible is the task set before anyone who would start upon "the quest for the historical Christ." The point to be emphasized is the importance of removing every obstacle from that quest, to make sure that in offering Jesus to the youth of China we shall not permit our tradition to hide his face, nor our modern scholarship to mar his visage. When into the hands of Chinese scholars or simple peasants there comes the gospel story, the figure of Jesus makes its appeal unhindered by theological verbiage that centuries of Christian thought and controversy have wrapped about him in other lands. For them these well-meant efforts have not yet obscured the fact of Jesus. It is that Jesus who must be presented.

The Character of Jesus

Thus revealed, what is it that the Chinese youth sees? What is it that youth of any country sees? First of all he sees the Man Christ Jesus. "He lived his life under the normal conditions and limitations of mankind. He did not seem to his contemporaries to be a strange and unintelligible Being, a visitant from another world. They never doubted his humanity."³ It is thus that he is seen today; as an historical figure he first impresses the Chinese reader of the gospels. "This young man, so full of life and love," is the way Professor Kuan Hsi-pin refers to him.⁴ "An historical person who demonstrated the gospel of love," writes Wang Kuei-sheng of Jesus. "He became the law and the pattern of human goodness." "An ordinary and extra-ordinary man," is Professor T. C. Chao's characterization of him. It is first of all the sterling worth of the man that becomes significant for Chinese youth, significant first of all definitely and simply as an example for them to emulate, a pattern after which they may seek to shape their lives. "We should know Jesus and imitate him," exclaims Hsu Pao-chien.

3. Nathaniel Micklem—"Mysterium Christi"—page 157.

4. This and the subsequent quotations of Chinese writers are taken from "The Jesus I Know."

This attitude of course is not peculiar to the Chinese. Walter Horton says, "With a very considerable proportion of Christians the basis of their conception of the living Christ is the picture of Jesus which they find in the Gospels. Jesus thus lives in their minds substantially as he lived in Galilee, though of course the picture is very imperfect."⁵ But to the Chinese this picture is less confused with the development of later ideas, it is less the idealized Lord, less (what Horton terms) "the living Christ."

Such a pattern has relevance, for ever there has been that searching after a pattern worth emulating. The disciples of Confucius were constantly looking to him to show them how to live, and he had to warn them against imitating him too closely. One might almost write the history of the nation in terms of a search for a model for young life. The loyalty with which students emulate and cling to a teacher has almost religious aspects in Chinese society. That eager yearning finds unique satisfaction in the person of Jesus as he is seen in the gospel narrative.

The elements of his character which appeal to men are of course as varied as the needs of men. "The blamelessness of his life" expresses an old philosophical and ethical concept familiar in Chinese literature and finding realization in the person of Jesus. "His independence and fearlessness," "his correct concept of life," "his loyalty to truth," "he practiced what he preached," "his reasonableness," "my example and inspiration,"—these are expressions that appear in Chinese efforts to describe the Jesus that is known. One non-Christian leader of the renaissance movement wrote, "I wish the Chinese people had in their blood something of the lofty character of Jesus, that fearlessness and that spirit of sacrifice which sent him to the cross. Such qualities of life will transform our nation."⁶ But through and above all of these ideas runs the prevalent theme of love as most characteristic of Jesus in all of his human relationship,—a love which involved the most complete self-surrender and knew no bounds. The universality of Jesus' love has made a profound impression. It is limited neither by national nor by class barriers. And it is so complete, so absolute!

This it is which comes to have the fullest significance and the greatest relevance for the Chinese whose thought is rooted in the philosophy of his race and is consciously or unconsciously searching for its completion. Kagawa's phrase, "Love is the law of life," is almost literally the Chinese expression used by several of these writers already quoted. They are thinking in terms of a harmonious Universe, and realize that such a Universe must have what they have called "a center." Y. T. Wu finds that "Jesus identifies love with the infinite life of the universe." T. C. Shen says, "When selfishness is gone there is nothing to separate us from Nature—we are in harmony."

5. "Shall We Discard the Living Christ?"

6. *Christian Century*, June 30, 1937—"The Orient Reconsiders Christianity", by Y. T. Wu.

Jesus and Communism

The incarnation of Love in the person of Jesus gives him relevance for the youth who have a sense of kinship to all mankind—at least to as large a social group as they can comprehend. This sense is strong in the young men and women of China today. The tremendous appeal of Communism to the student classes has found them in no small degree responsive because of their social consciousness. Never strongly individualistic, but always trained to realize their obligation to other members of the group, these youths have identified their interests with those of the less favored groups and classes. The appeal to class conflict has not been so effective, for class distinctions are relatively new in the social and economic structure and the lines are not yet deeply drawn. But the humanitarian urge, the community of interest, is very real and wide-spread, and the brotherhood of man (at least "within the Four Seas") is an old concept. This was the idea which Communist propaganda sent broadcast over the land. It was difficult to arouse much popular hatred for the capitalists as a class. The denunciation of the militarists found more hearty response as being more thoroughly rooted in Chinese philosophy and related to much recent bitter experience. But it was the motive of goodwill to the underprivileged that was played up in the slogans of the new movement as it swept northward which caught the imagination and aroused the enthusiasm of the youth everywhere. How soon disillusionment shattered hopes and dreams, for there was nowhere to be found an embodiment of this goodwill motive! The Communism which was demonstrated was, as Kagawa expressed it, "a Communism of getting, not giving." It turned out to be not a religion of goodwill but of hatred, not a constructive enterprise but a destructive tornado. Those may have been but temporary and outward manifestations, but they soon left youth groping for some real embodiment of that which they had thought to have found in the Communist Movement.

A deeper and more significant reason for the failure of Communism to hold the allegiance of Chinese youth was found in its insufficiency in the realm of resolving conflict and integrating the whole of experience. The welter of conflicts which have been characterizing the experience of youth in other lands during the period since the World War has descended with tremendous force upon the young men and women of China. They have been plunged with terrifying suddenness into a world where practically every old standard has been destroyed, where every aspect of life has to be measured on a new scale, where almost none of the values of the previous generation continue to have meaning. All that has been said and written about the conflicts to which adolescents have been subject in the West has been true to the nth degree of those who live in China. Here the whole civilization has been catapulted

through a century of time in a decade. Communism at first seemed to offer a philosophy about which the young life might reorganize itself. It seemed to offer a cause that would call forth the most enthusiastic loyalties. That it failed to satisfy the philosophical and religious needs of its thoughtful adherents was doubtless due in part to its own instability. It was not given a chance to demonstrate its worth in the country. It was itself constantly suffering from conflicts and insecurities. More fundamental however were its inability to offer that personal element which becomes a dynamic in young life, and its inherent lack of universal values which become potent for living. As a philosophy it presented "a system of ideas which appeals to intelligence," but as a religion it fell short at the point of becoming "an organization of universal and ultimate values with the ends of living."¹ The history of China had furnished philosophy enough, and much good philosophy. What the youth of China needed and yearned for to save it out of the meaningless conflicts with which it was buffeted was such a unifying figure as Jesus who fulfilled the deepest longings, who measured up to the highest ideals, who gave meaning to the baffling perplexities of existence.

The Teaching of Jesus

Many writers have found in the teachings of Jesus the basic doctrines of Communism. John MacMurray in "Creative Society" traces many similarities, claiming that the religion of Jesus was fully material, yet universal, that like a true Communist Jesus believes in the common man and sees wealth as the great obstacle to the kingdom, mistreating the ruling classes and making himself the true exponent of a social revolution.

These social teachings of Jesus make a powerful appeal to Chinese youth. One who has been very close to the thought life of the present student generation said recently, "It is easy for the Chinese to see Jesus as a revolutionary, as the upholder of justice and the challenger of the rights of the oppressed. It may be a one-sided picture of Jesus, yet it may not be an irrelevant picture. The fact that the Christian nations of the West are complacent about social injustices and have actually contributed to China's troubles in the past must have added weight to such an attitude. The additional fact of the rapid spread of radical ideas in China makes such an attitude understandable." Much has been written in the West about the social teachings of Jesus, and recent expositions of those teachings which tend to identify them with doctrines or principles of Communism find ready acceptance among idealistic and realistic Chinese youth. As indicated above, Communism has not filled the need as a religion for China. On the other hand it has by no means been abandoned in its entirety as an economic and social idea, and those teachings of Jesus which seem to coincide with liberal social thought in any system are eagerly espoused by many intelligent youths today. To be sure many a young man finds difficulty in taking the teachings

1. W. C. Bowers, "Fidelity and the Good Life"—page 117.
2. Y. T. Wu, "The Orient Reconsiders Christianity" in *The Christian Century*, June 30, 1937.

of Jesus and applying them with any great degree of literalness to the situation in which he finds himself in this complex twentieth century. The study of Jesus however will make clear to him that his teaching was not in terms of concrete directions for action and behavior, but rather in terms of eternal principles and simple statements of his crystal clear insight into men and situations. The quoted remark of Professor Harnack is pertinent, who when asked whether Jesus was the solution for all problems replied, "No, Jesus is not the solution, but as we become like him we will find the solution to every problem."³ Walter Horton goes further and says, "Experience has taught most of us that in Jesus are to be found truths that we afterwards discover running through all life, blazoned across the face of the heavens—but we should never have found them in life if we had not first found them in Jesus. Experience has taught us that on the whole it is safe to trust Jesus' principles—his central principles—even when it is impossible at first to verify them in life."⁴

Jesus and Sin

Even more than the teaching of Jesus it is his living that has relevance—the genuineness and completeness of his loving, utterly unselfish outreach to the common man that has appealed to Chinese youth as the Incarnation of the highest concept he has known, the fulfillment of the central element in Nature of which he recognizes himself a part. He hears discordant notes in the Symphony of Nature. He finds men in conflict because each seeks his own desires, each struggles for self-realization, and thus pulls away from the Center of the Universe. When he takes up the gospel narrative he finds in Jesus one who showed no signs of self-interest, one who sought always to know and to do the will of God, to harmonize his every thought and activity with that of Life's Center. This he succeeded in doing as no other man has ever done. He identified himself with God, and identified himself with man, all in love, thus doing two things—he revealed the fundamental nature of God as Love (and thus gave what we commonly call an element of Personality to the Center of the Universe), and he restored the necessary harmony between man and the Universe of which man is a part and which his self-interest tends to disintegrate.

The Chinese concept of disharmony in the universe bears some close resemblance to the Christian doctrine of sin, if and when sin is regarded as a tendency to exalt the self or some lesser being than God. The Chinese concept of God may be relatively ill-defined and vague, and Sin in the orthodox evangelical Protestant sense something rather remote from his mind. At least many missionaries have complained of their inability either to discover in the Chinese or to arouse in him a sense of personal sin or guilt. When, however, he is approached from the angle of his relationship to the Universe (to which he ascribes some real Personal element) and of his tendency to disintegrate that Universe by chasing his own selfish ends instead of the harmony of the whole, he not only understands but responds.

3. Quoted by Lynn White in sermon at Union Theological Seminary on July 18, 1937.

4. "Shall We Discard the Living Christ?"

Jesus therefore makes a tremendous appeal with his absolute unselfishness, his unbounded love. Through this unselfishness and love he is recognized to be integrating himself perfectly with Nature. By those who have reached the higher concept of a God beyond and above Nature, he is seen to be identifying himself with the spirit and will of God. To quote again Wu Yao-tsung, "Jesus identifies love with the infinite life of the universe, which is the source of human life;" and Pao Kuang-lin says, "Jesus took as the center of the Universe a God of Love, eternally active, ceaselessly creative, and lived in the consciousness of God's will and Love."⁵

Jesus and Suffering

No religion nor religious leader can meet the need of Chinese youth today that does not make some real contribution toward solving the problem of human suffering and, we may well add, national suffering. If Jesus is relevant for him today he must in some way help this youth to understand, or at least to bear triumphantly, his personal sorrow and the suffering which he shares with the Nation of which he is a part. To a large extent he may recognize this to be the direct result of sin, of selfishness, his own, his country's, that of his family and forebears with whom he is closely identified. But he knows full well that there is terrible human suffering on the part of multitudes of innocents whose sin can in no sense have direct relationship to the terrible ordeal which has come upon them. He sees that those who sought the way of peace and goodwill have fallen victim to the self-glorifying personification of lust for power. He sees thousands of quiet citizens blown from their homes and business and if they have escaped with their lives they are destitute and desolate. Not only under the death-dealing blows of foreign militarists but also as victims of capitalists' greed or even of merciless economic forces for which no immediate agent can be found to bear the blame he sees his family and his fellow villagers ground down into bitter poverty, the innocent sufferers in a world that seems all awry. Has Jesus any significance for such a situation?

In Jesus youth sees a radiant example of one who suffered through the self-seeking of others with never a whimper of complaint. In this as in other aspects of his life Jesus becomes an inspiration to others to emulate him in spirit and in deed. But here again Jesus is more than example and inspiration. It is difficult to write of Jesus' death without falling into theological language that has no meaning for the uninitiated. Can it be said simply that here very truly Jesus revealed the nature of God? He showed Him to be not only a loving God (the outstanding feature perhaps) but even as truly a suffering God. The oft-quoted words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), have made a profound impression of the utterly forgiving spirit of the loving God revealed in Jesus. Says Nathaniel Micklem, "He not only taught that God forgives and loves—he made it creditable."⁶ The words, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46), have been repeated as an indication of that trust which was an element of Jesus'

5. "The Jesus I Know"

6. "Mysterium Christi"

identification with his Father God. Men have not been quite so quick to recognize that in this whole agonizing experience of his death Jesus was revealing the suffering of God.

Youth everywhere has to face the fact of suffering. In the experience of Jesus he begins to understand that suffering is of the very nature of the Universe. He has discovered that throughout Jesus' life he was revealing the character of God, that he has so-to-speak "identified himself with the Heart of the Universe." Then through his death also comes some appreciation of the fact that such innocent suffering is not a discordant note, but part of the bitter-sweet harmony of the Universe—that sorrow and vicarious suffering are woven into the pattern of creation with joy and gladness as contrasting threads that heighten the beauty of the whole design.

One further aspect of the relevance of Jesus in the problem of suffering may be mentioned. It is the redemptive element, the winning force of his character, not as an example but as a spiritual force continuing to turn men's consciences toward the better way. To say that the way Jesus suffered without complaint at the hands of wicked men and corrupt society becomes a rebuke and pricks men's consciences is not quite enough. There is more to it than a rational process. There is spiritual power released in more than example and more than inspiration. It is the power that leads to that sort of repentance which turns us from ourselves toward God and thus unites us with Him in the process of redeeming, reintegrating the world. To quote Micklem again, "Through the man Christ Jesus, through the records of his life, through his spirit moving in our hearts, we have felt the touch of God—in mercy for our sins, in strength for our daily task, in the quickening of insight, in the enlarging and deepening of affection, in a peace deeper than life's discords and disasters; we have in measure received the Spirit of Jesus whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"⁷

Conclusion

The most significant aspect of Jesus' life, already implied in several preceding paragraphs, in his identification of himself with God. Here is something which in theological controversies of the church has led to all sorts of metaphysical explanations and has created a vocabulary that is meaningless to the oriental. But the experience itself is a part of that philosophy of the universe which has been sketched above. Jesus brings into focus these philosophical concepts of the Universe, first by personalizing its Center and lifting it to the concept of a loving Father God, and second by integrating himself with that Center. Professor T. C. Chao refers to this process in simple language: "He sought God's will and discovered the oneness of God and man. By communion the barrier between man and God was overcome." John MacMurray carries this idea further and gives the clue to the deeper meaning of Jesus to those who are torn, buffeted, fearful and in need of peace when he speaks of the essence of religion as the integration with man and nature that offsets fear which is the antithesis of love. We have already seen

how Jesus revealed the love of God. His integrating of himself with that God means much in the restoration of man to his intimate relationships with God. "Man has been created by God," says Emil Brunner, "in such a way that he is never complete in himself; he is only complete through his relation to God."⁸ Because in Jesus we find this complete integration with God and with man, God becomes knowable and lovable, the universe becomes meaningful and life becomes not only enduring but worthwhile. As Micklem says, "He is the revelation of the Father's heart and will; his voice, whether in command or comfort, is to us the voice of God; the perpetual self-revelation of God to man through every noble character finds in Jesus its crown and complete fulfillment."⁹

So it is that Jesus is relevant for the youth of China today. Creeds and schisms, ecclesiastical organizations and theological explanations, civilizations and churches may fail of their task. Communism and Nationalism may lead to disillusionment and prove their short-comings. Through the disappointment and confusion, the sorrow and the need, the figure of the man Jesus stands forth. "He alone has loved God with *all* his heart and soul and mind and strength; he alone has lived wholly for his fellowmen; he alone has so faced life's disasters as to triumph over them and to turn a shameful gibbet into man's glory and the symbol of his hope. He alone has been the perfect son of God, the perfect brother of man, the victor over life by faith... Herein lies the uniqueness of Jesus which sets him apart from all other sons of men."¹⁰

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bible—American Standard Version.
Boll and Deisman, editors—"Mysterium Christi"—Longmans, Green & Co.—1930.
Bower, W. C.—"The Living Bible"—Harper & Bros.—1936.
Bower, W. C.—"Religion and the Good Life"—Abingdon Press—1933.
Brunner, Emil—"Divine Imperative"—Lutterworth Press—1937.
Case, Shirley Jackson—"The Historicity of Jesus"—Univ. of Chicago Press—1912.
Horton, Walter M.—"Shall We Discard the Living Christ"—The Biblical World, Volume 53, Number 3—May, 1919.
Koo, T. Z. editor—"The Jesus I Know"—Shanghai—1930.
Laymen's Inquiry—"Re-Thinking Missions"—Harper & Bros.—1932.
Lippmann, Walter—"Preface to Morals"—MacMillan Co.—1930.
Lyman, Mary Ely—"Jesus"—Hazen Books on Religion—1937.
MacMurray, John—"Creative Society"—Student Christian Movement Press—1935.
Scott and Vlastos, editors—"Towards the Christian Revolution"—Willett, Clark & Co.—1936.
Wu, Y. T.—"The Orient Reconsiders Christianity"—The Christian Century, June 30, 1937.

8. "Divine Imperative"—page 480.
9. "Mysterium Christi"—page 159.
10. "Mysterium Christi"—page 156.

7 "Mysterium Christi"

SEP 8 '72

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in the
Faculty of Union Theological Seminary,
Columbia University, August, 1937.

Photographs from this
file have not been
included but are
available upon request.
For more information
please contact
research@gcah.org