



# Catholic Biblical Federation

## Biblical Pastoral Ministry in Asia

Reading the Bible in Korea

*Logos and dao*

Translation of Christian concepts into Chinese

*Ars Sacra Pekinensis*

Art as a way to inculturation

Spiritual Reading of Scripture



## CONTENTS

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**Editors:**

Ludger Feldkämper, Alexander Schweitzer

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Hildegard Rathgeb

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**Feature Articles**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Reading the Bible in an Asian context - Example Korea</b>               | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Ars Sacra Pekinensis - Christmas themes in Chinese picture language</b> | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Logos and dao - Translation of Christian concepts into Chinese</b>      | <b>17</b> |

**Follow-up to the Hong Kong Plenary Assembly**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>In search of the meaning of Scripture</b>       | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Criteria for judging methods of Bible study</b> | <b>21</b> |

**Life of the Federation**

- |                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| <b>Courses</b>      | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Translations</b> | <b>23</b> |
| <b>Notices</b>      | <b>23</b> |

**Books and Materials**

**"Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided  
for all the Christian faithful"**  
(*Dei Verbum*, 22).

**KATHOLISCHE BIBELFÖDERATION**

General Secretariat  
Postfach 10 52 22  
D-70045 Stuttgart  
Germany

Tel.: (07 11) 1 69 24-0  
Fax: (07 11) 1 69 24 24  
Email: [bdv@kbf.n-e-t.de](mailto:bdv@kbf.n-e-t.de)

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Dear Readers,

*Ex oriente lux* - This well known saying serves to connect Christmas and Asia, serving as it does in the Christmas context to signify the arrival of the Saviour in the world and pointing geographically toward the eastern countries of our earth. So it is well suited to the present number of the Bulletin, which is the Christmas edition of 1997 dedicated to Bible work in Asia.

This connection - Asia and Christmas - will be especially noticeable in the Christmas themes of the Chinese artists of the school *Ars Sacra Pekinensis*, which you will find in the middle of this number. Art students and young painters at the Academy of Art, founded in the autumn of 1930 at the Catholic University of Beijing, produced works during the following decades that translated the content of the Christian faith into Chinese picture language. These are interesting documents for the inculturation of Christian faith. Celso Costantini, Papal Nuntius in China until 1933 and himself an artist and art critic, wrote of the art of 'the great cultural peoples of the East': «It tends to present not so much the physical and material reality as to perceive the soul of things and then to record them in forms arising from this internalized viewpoint.»

Such an 'internalized viewpoint' also characterizes Asian theology and Bible reading. The first contribution in this number about Bible reading in Korea by Sr. Maura Cho allows us to see how the Word of God penetrates the life of earlier and contemporary Christians in Korea. However, it does not remain internal. The internalized Word of God pushes one to action in the society and to witnessing for people - sometimes even to the final sacrifice. This also is a translation of the Word of God into the personal and social context.

The contribution of Jost Zetsche also concerns the translation of the Christian message into Chinese, this time not in painting but in written and spoken (picture) language. He explains, using the concepts *λογος* and *dao* as examples, the problems and the opportunities for translating Christian concepts into a language that has at its disposal highly developed religious and philosophical concepts. It is not only in China that biblical preaching and daily biblical pastoral work raise questions about the translation of Christian concepts and the interpretation of the content of Christian belief.

In the column *Follow-up of Hong Kong* you will find two contributions of the President of the CBF, Bishop Wilhelm Egger. In his explanation of the four levels of meaning, he falls back on an ancient tradition of interpretation. Only on the basis of allegorical interpretation was it possible to count the First Testament as part of the Canon of Scripture. However, allegorical interpretation is not a peculiarity of Christian exegesis, but characterizes all the great western literary cultures in their efforts to assure validity and meaningfulness to the classical-canonical writings after thousands of years. On the basis of the literal and historical meaning the spiritual dimension and the ethical-moral teachings of these texts ought to be made accessible and fruitful for the hearers and readers. For us this means taking the step, on the solid basis of historical-critical biblical exegesis, to an interpretation of the bible that bears fruit on a spiritual and moral level. The many-sided efforts to translate the Word of God in the different levels of our existence are made once more clear in the reports about the activities of our members in the section *From the Federation*.

This Christmas number will reach many of you only after the liturgical Christmas season. So I wish you a happy feast of the Incarnation on Christmas Day and on every day of the new year.

Alexander M. Schweitzer

**Please take note of the new subscription rates for 1998 (p. 2)!**

## Feature Articles

### READING THE BIBLE IN AN ASIAN CONTEXT

*This contribution about Bible reading in Korea is not restricted to the presentation of Bible work and biblical pastoral practice. Sr. Maura Cho draws a picture of the piety of Asian Christians, of their attitude toward the Word of God. This attitude of quiet, of reverence, and of prayer is the basis of the lived, effective faith. The first Christians of Korea became martyrs, today's Christians are working for a more just society. The contribution makes evident the connection between the internalization of the Word of God and commitment in the faith. It appeared in SEDOS Bulletin 28, 1996 and is being reprinted in a shortened version.*

#### I. PROLOGUE

##### How do Asians read the Bible?

I do not intend to present an empirical study on how the average Asian reads the Bible. Instead, I would like to examine the way the Bible was read in Asia in its historical context. Since Asia is so huge, and its long history so rich, I can only reduce the question to much smaller ones that are easier to handle.

##### First, does Asia have a different tradition of Scripture reading from the West?

If so, how can we characterise this unique tradition? In answering this question, we broaden the concept of "Scripture" to include the Oriental scriptures throughout history, that

have made a significant impression on the heart of each Asian.

The history of Asian scriptures is about 2,000 years older than the history of the Bible in Asian soil. Asia has had its own scriptures (wisdom literature) for a long time. Great sages have appeared.

This tradition that is deeply imprinted into the Asian language, culture, and heart is not something that can be changed easily.

##### Second, how did Asia pick up and read the Bible, when it finally came to the East?

The history of the Bible in Asia began roughly in the 16th century. There were previous occasions when the Bible was introduced into Asia, but it

never lasted. Now, in dealing with this question, I am going to limit my attention to the case of the early Korean Church.

#### The method Asian Sages used to the Asian Wisdom Books.

These Sages have not only witnessed and met the Light of Wisdom, they have also left guidelines on how to read the scriptures.

Their teachings are practised not only by those who profess to be the disciples of these Asian Sages; indeed, their wisdom itself and their guidelines to attain such Wisdom, either through meditation or from study of the Scriptures, have become part of the Asian language, culture and tradition.

These Sages have taught us how to 'meet' the Scriptures with the entire body. They taught that scripture reading, as well as meditation, should be done in 'silence' and 'namelessness'. The exact meaning of this claim will be clarified later.

The second part of my paper deals with the manner in which simple people with a child's heart read the Bible. 'Reading' is actually a misnomer. They ate the scrolls of the Bible (cf. Rv 10:10).

#### II. THE ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

##### 1. A Sound of sheer silence

**The ultimate purpose of Bible reading is to have an encounter with God.** Therefore the method of Bible reading should not be too far away from the way of encountering God.

In the great Asian tradition, the way of encountering the Truth is exactly the same as the way of reading the Oriental scriptures. Thus, before we discuss how Asians read the Bible, I should like to refer to the story of Elijah.





*Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.*

*When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (cf. 1 Kgs 19:11-13).*

The story of Elijah is the story of each one of us especially if very afraid, disappointed, and sad for the sake of God's work. Elijah had zeal for God, but the Israelites had all forsaken the covenant with Yahweh. He thinks that he is the only prophet left, and yet he, himself, is being pursued by Jezebel.

He stood on Mount Horeb where God in revealing Himself to Moses had instituted the covenant with the Israelites. There, although he saw powerful phenomena Elijah saw with his inner eye that there was no Yahweh.

In the above Scripture passage, God asked the question at least twice: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And Elijah answered it in exactly the same manner. He repeatedly said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts... I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away".

It is as if Elijah and God were not in perfect communication. It sounds as if Elijah was too occupied with his own thoughts that he did not grasp why God kept on asking him the same question: "What are you doing?"

Actually, isn't this the type of question parents ask children who seem to digress the wrong way? "What are you doing, son?"

It takes time before the son finally realises that the mother was not ge-

nuinely interested in what he was doing but was more concerned with where he was heading. He suddenly gets the true message and abruptly "wakes up".

Then, the Scripture says, there was a 'sound of sheer silence'. The silence here is not limited to the silence of external noises.

As a matter of fact, all inner thoughts, feelings, passions, and zeal itself, no matter how well intentioned, were in a state of absolute silence. Then Elijah finally recognised the presence of the Lord.

Elijah immediately went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. The Scripture says that Elijah hid his face with his mantle in the manner Moses had hid his face (cf. Ex 3:6).

Hiding one's face in Eastern culture means that someone humbly lets himself become 'anonymous', that is 'without a name'.

I say 'without a name', because a 'name' in the Eastern culture, which the Hebrew people also shared, symbolises 'own' pride, fame, authority, majesty, renown, glory, and self-independence. In comparison, Christians hide under the mantle of Jesus, and use the 'Name' of the Lord instead of their own.

Scripture says that Yahweh told Moses, "You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live" (cf. Ex 33:20).

Indeed no man can see Yahweh as long as he tries to encounter God as a self-independent being recognised and respected by his own 'name'. In his anonymous self, with a mantle of humility covering human 'glory'; one can indeed have an encounter with God like Moses and Elijah did.

Thus, Elijah met the Lord in "sheer silence" and in total humility of "namelessness". Truly, "sheer silence" and "namelessness" seem to be what characterise the state of mind of all of

those who have been privileged to encounter God in person.

***Buddha, Laotzu and Confucius certainly saw the light. Truly they were in the same spirit as Elijah.***

## 2. Three sages in Asia

*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; (Rom 1: 19-20).*

In Asia, there have been many great souls who have experienced the presence of "I AM" like Elijah. "I AM" was the 'nameless' Name by which the Lord revealed Himself to Moses (cf. Ex 3:14).

"I AM" was not the Name Hebrew people wanted to know and to tell the world that this God is the God of the Hebrew people and the Hebrew people only.

Thanks be to God, the Asian Sages I am going to introduce in this section never claimed that they knew the Name of the Nameless One.

Thus in all humility and honesty, Lao-tzu called the One, the "Nameless", ('Tao' is not a name in Lao-tzu. It is nameless. The first sentence in his *Tao-te-ching* is that "If Tao can be named it is not Tao"), and Buddha addressed the One as Sunyata: the "Void".

With an acknowledgement to them, Asia did not err in creating an "inner" false image of God, or in calling upon

the Name of the Nameless in vain (Ex 20:4-7).

To some they may look like 'atheists' since they do not seem to have the temple of "God" where they worship Him. They do not 'define' God, or give any name to Him.

To others they may sound like 'polytheists' since they say their Nameless One is everywhere.

I would sincerely recommend those to "come and see" (Jn 1:39, 1:46, 11:34) Asia in total silence and humility before forming any opinion as to what these Asians were saying.

The Asian Sages like Buddha, Lao-tzu, and Confucius had never met the Word that became flesh. But in their utter silence and humility, they certainly saw the Light, and did not turn away from it. Truly they were in the same spirit as Elijah.

Buddha, Lao-tzu, and Confucius, the three most important sages of the East lived between the 6th and 5th century B. C.

It is interesting to note that the period in which they were enlightened and were teaching their wisdom, coincided with the dark age of the Babylonian captivity for the descendants of Israel.

Thus, at the time God's chosen people had turned away from God and had become captives in Babylon, the wind of enlightenment was blowing in the East.

This wind was going to make a notable impact on the manner people face nature and the universe and on how one relates to one's neighbours.

Truth was waiting until there was 'utter silence'.

But the 'silence' of all thoughts, emotions, desires, and will is only the beginning. In the state that the Buddha reached, 'all of a sudden' his own self was not there.

When the eyes, the ears, the heart, the will, the thought stops every conscious activity, then there is no 'subject' that is differentiated from the outside reality.

This is called the state of "non-existence of self". In that state, the high barrier between the self and outside, visible and invisible reality, no longer exists.

And only in this state of "non-existence of self", or "namelessness", can one truly see the invisible Truth.

It is not that the person has obtained the Truth. Rather the Truth was always there, but now the person can see what he could not see before.

He was blind before due to all sorts of movement and preoccupations, but now he can see! (cf. Jn 9:25).

### III. KYUNG (CHING, scripture) READING IN ASIA

Wisdom writers in the Orient knew that there was a limit in trying to convey wisdom in written characters.

Wisdom, by definition, is beyond the grasp of the normal intellect. A Wisdom book is called *Kyung* in Korea, or *Ching* in China.

In Chan Buddhism, there is a parable about people who only look at the finger of a monk instead of at the moon to which he was pointing.

Asian Sages understood that their own teachings had to be transmitted in writing, as a tool. But even then they had the wisdom and foresight to warn future readers in advance that they should not confuse the writings with the Truth itself.

The book is only a 'finger' pointing at the Truth. Thus, they spent a lot of energy on instructing their future disciples the proper way to read the scriptures.

How considerate they were! And what selfless love they had for their future disciples!

The reading method taught by the Asian Sages is summarised below. The first thing to note is that the principle of reading is the same as the principle of meeting the "Wisdom".

One should maintain "utter silence", and remain "anonymous". First, "utter silence" means that one should calm all one's thoughts, emotions, desires, and passions.

Second, they should remain "anonymous" and "self-less" in facing the Truth contained in the book.

If one tries to analyse the "dead letters" in an egocentric way, one becomes the 'subject', and the book the 'object', there is no unity between the self and the book. 'Self' tries to be in the driving seat, and so resists becoming humbly 'anonymous'.

As an analogy, we can compare this with the critical remarks Jesus made as regards the Pharisees' manner of reading.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees saying, "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me" (cf. Jn 5:39).

Look what was happening at the time. There was the Wisdom, the Light, the Truth, and the Eternal Life standing in person in front of the Pharisees.

But the Pharisees, even with the seemingly good intention of "finding" the way to eternal life from Scripture, could not recognise the Life Himself who was standing right in front of them!

### 1. Read the Scripture with your whole body as one eye

*Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole*



*body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. Therefore, be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light (cf. Lk 11:3436).*

What is meant by the above adage of 'reading the Scripture with the body as one eye' can be explained in two steps.

First, one should not rely on the natural 'eye' alone in reading the Scriptures. Second, reading should be done in the manner that the whole body meets the author behind the Scripture, and the spirit behind the author.

Regarding the first aspect, one should not use the natural organ alone. The natural sight mentioned here is not simply physical eyesight.

Rather it is the intellectual faculty of perception. 'Eyes' stand for the intellectual faculty of perception even in the case of the Bible verses above.

Truly Middle Eastern culture is not much different from that of the East! The intellect teaches people how to analyse.

Unfortunately, the intellectual faculty of man is limited as it is programmed to look at matters only from an egocentric perspective.

People honestly try hard to grasp the truth in their heart. But as long as they remain in the driving seat, they are inclined to develop seriously biased views, looking at the Scriptures only from a 'subjective' angle, no matter how hard they try to be 'objective'.

A prejudiced view means that one judges or discriminates between 'good' and 'bad', between 'right' and 'wrong', between 'heaven' and 'hell', or between 'life' and 'death' from one's own perspective, and cultural back-

ground, but, principally from egoistic self-love.

Secondly, regarding the entire body's encounter with the Lord, one should literally meet Scripture, eat, and taste the whole content of it with one's whole flesh, soul, and spirit.

In the Oriental reading method, there is no difference between metaphysics and ethics. It is based upon the holistic approach.

When the whole flesh, as well as the soul and spirit, meet the Light - the flesh can be awakened as much as the soul or spirit.

When the flesh is fully awakened, it no longer obeys the command of lust but the command of the True Light.

***Free the heart from  
self-centredness,  
and become  
'without name'.***

***Only then you can  
see the truth con-  
tained in Scriptures***

Asian *Kyung*, or *Ching*, is literally the warp or the vertical threads of a loom. The warp, *Kyung*, alone does not make a fabric. Fabric is woven only when the horizontal threads, or weft, are fed into the loom.

In this context, reading is the encounter between the weft and the warp, i.e. Scripture and the whole body. The ultimate state of the body's encounter with Scripture is the "union" of the body with Scripture, and its authors.

There no longer exists two because they became one body. There is only oneness.

In Buddhism, this state of "union" between the two entities is called *sam-mae-kyung* (*samadhi*). *Sam-mae-kyung* is the spiritual state where the high wall that divides the self from the rest of the universe becomes "broken down".

In such a state of perfect "union", I become the universe and the universe becomes me. As applied to reading, in *sam-mae-kyung* (*samadhi*), I become the scripture, and the scripture becomes me.

## **2. Make your heart become like a clear mirror**

The principle of scripture reading can also be explained using different symbolism.

The human heart was originally like the clearest mirror or water that reflects everything in its pristine state. But if the mirror becomes dull, then it reflects a distorted image.

Thus one cannot see the wisdom and truth hidden in Scripture, if one's heart is not like a clear mirror or pure lake water.

The first thing to do, then, is to "silence" all the noise made by the faculty of the intellect, emotion, and will. But the most important thing to do, is to free the heart from self-centredness, and to become 'without name'. Only then can one see clearly the truth contained in the Scriptures.

Matters of 'the heart' can only be transmitted through the 'heart'. In the terminology of Chan Buddhism, this is called '*lee-sim-jun-sim*', meaning literally 'communicate what is from the heart through the heart'.

*Kyung* has been written by the language of the 'heart'. Hence, one needs to utilise the faculty of the 'heart'.

An ordinary person has lost the faculty of listening with the ears of the 'heart'. A person who looks at the outside



world using only his self-centred eyes cannot see the Truth as the Truth would see itself.

Human beings have lost the faculty of 'heart' that directly understands the heart of others because of their spiritual blindness. But people who love each other do understand the 'heart' language of another.

A mother understands the heart of her baby, and the baby understands the heart of its mother. Even in Catholicism, there has been a tradition of understanding scripture by '*lee-sim-jun-sim*'.

The only difference is that in Christianity, by revelation, the Holy Spirit replaces the rather ambiguous concept of 'heart'.

Thus, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation says that "...Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred Spirit in which it was written..." (from *Dei Verbum*, n. 3:12).

This means that the Scripture that was written in the Holy Spirit should be read and interpreted only in the Holy Spirit. Asian teachers do their utmost to help their disciples to 'resurrect' the dead faculties of the heart.

They 'opened' the heart of their disciples, in the manner our Lord Jesus had opened the 'mind' of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:45).

### 3. Is the Asian reading approach too subjective, or not objective enough?

From the Western perspective, the Asian approach to reading the Books of Wisdom can be criticised as being too 'subjective', and lacking in 'objectivity'.

Yet from a truly Asian perspective, the differentiation between objectivity and subjectivity itself is the symptom of a sinful man who lives in the illusive realm of self-centredness.

When a man is freed from the realm of self-centredness, there is no such thing as the 'subject' or 'I'. If there is no 'subject', then there is no 'object', nor 'objectivity'. To such a person, the two - subject and object - have truly become one.

Moreover, one should note that even the New Testament is full of a seemingly 'subjective' interpretation of the Old Testament by Jesus Christ himself, Paul, and the other Epistle writers.

Yet Asian Sages will not call such an interpretation of Scripture 'subjective'. Yes, it certainly is a "personal" interpretation. 'Personal' interpretation is not the same thing as a 'subjective' interpretation.

A person who is truly free from self-attachment, obtains 'personal' understanding by fully experiencing the Scripture with his entire person - the flesh, soul and spirit.

It was exactly this kind of personal experience toward which the Asian teachers tried so hard to guide their disciples.

## IV. THE SEED OF THE BIBLE THAT FELL ON KOREAN SOIL

### 1. The cultural soil of Korea

#### The Country of Morning Calmness

The ancient name of Korea was *Cho-Sun* that means 'Morning Calmness'.

In ancient Chinese literature the country is identified by its people with white clothes. The colour white symbolises the colourless tone of the morning sunlight.

*You will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn*

*upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace* (cf. Lk 1:7-79).

The above verses from the Benedictus of Zechariah mention the sunrise. They also mention the journey of peace, the shalom (peace) that the Light from the dawn will guide the Israelites.

Shalom was also the first word used by the risen Lord. It was as if he was saying, "Look at the sunrise! Look at this resurrection! Have no fear any longer. The darkness of death has finally been conquered!"

Can this be the same kind of peace that has been experienced by Koreans who have always enjoyed watching the sunrise from a high mountain, drawing utmost peace from it?

The first Korean faithful must have done the same thing. Some records indicate that they went to a high mountain during the hours of darkness for their retreats.

The concept of peace in Korea is beyond the usual meaning attached to it: namely, the reconciliation between the opposing parties.

Their peace encompasses the inner peace, the inner tranquillity, and the inner joy, the kind of peace one experiences watching the sunrise.

It is amazing that the Korean's concept of peace is very similar to the shalom of the Israelites.

### Traditional Korean Virtues

*Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things* (cf. Phil 4:8).





Koreans have traditionally honoured and loved Truthfulness, Goodness and Beauty. But, most important of all, they have cherished the virtue of 'fortitude'.

They would sacrifice their lives in order to be truthful, good, and to look 'beautiful'.

Truthfulness means being truthful to what man is meant to be from the beginning. It also means the obedience to the following five commandments: Loyalty to the superior, filial piety to parent, trustworthiness between friends, courage as a warrior, and finally generosity toward all people.

They respect those who sacrifice their lives for the cause of truthfulness. Those who practice the traditional virtue of 'fortitude' until death are not only the followers of a religious faith.

Even atheist gangsters often sacrifice their lives simply from loyalty to their superior, or being faithful to their fellow gangsters.

Until recently, many college students, including some Communists, have sacrificed their lives in the bloody fight against the military dictatorship.

The criterion of Goodness is whether a certain type of behaviour is helpful to the community or detrimental to it.

The ancient Korean word for 'good' is 'dyot-da' (now *chot-da*). The etymology of the word comes from 'dop-da' which means 'to help each other'.

On the other hand, the word for 'bad' is 'na-pu-da'. Its etymological root is 'na-pun-i-da' that means 'to assert only me'.

On the other hand, beauty is based on a harmonious relationship of the parts in relationship to the whole.

For example, when every person, thing and nature is in harmony within a community, it is beautiful. If every part of a face is in perfect harmony, then the face is beautiful.

This traditional attitude of Koreans toward truthfulness, goodness, and beauty is certainly not egoistic.

Yet, in its raw form, those who practice these traditional virtues are not necessarily 'ethical' or 'holy' from the aspect of more advanced virtues.

When the concept of the community to which each person attaches himself is limited to a small sect, then the entire society can be thrown into partisan warfare.

But when people are directed to consider themselves as part of the bigger community, then the traditional virtue of fortitude will benefit that larger community.

When the bigger community happens to be the invisible Kingdom of God, then they will end up becoming the bravest of warriors, who will not mind picking up the cross and following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

In this sense, Koreans have cherished the idea of becoming knights for the Lord, following the example of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a former secular knight who turned into the bravest spiritual warrior for the Kingdom of God.

## Religious Background

Throughout 5,000 years of history, Korea has been influenced mostly by the shamanistic worship of *Ha-nul* (Heaven).

About 2,000 years ago, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism - the three main religions of East Asia - were transmitted to Korea.

Due to the Korean characteristics of openness and creativity, Koreans have established their own version of each of these religions.

They excelled in each, and were most faithful to and persevering in each one due to their traditional virtue of loyalty, trustworthiness, and, most important of all, fortitude.

## 2. Historical perspective

### Encounter with the Good News

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied* (cf. Mt 5:6).

The Good News to the Koreans was first proclaimed to Confucian scholars.

During the late 18th century, a group of prominent Korean scholars came across the Christian books written in Chinese.

They were the people who were hungry and thirsty for the Truth that would set them free.

When they read the books, their hearts burned within them and their eyes were opened (cf. Lk 24:31-32).

The historical background of the period is important. During the whole period of the Cho-Sun Dynasty (1392-1910), the official religion (or philosophy) was Neo-Confucianism.

Confucianism originally aims at cultivating virtues that noble men should practice, in order to establish an ideal kingdom.

The Confucianism in 18th century Korea was no longer serving its original purpose.

Instead, it was being used as a tool to prolong the political and bureaucratic power of the ruling class.

Scholars were debating on 'empty' philosophies with no practical value (cf. Col 2:8).

The virtues of old Confucianism were replaced by formal rituals.

Thus, a group of prominent scholars professed that they would pursue knowledge and truth that makes 'real' sense.

All of these belonged to the highest *Yang-ban* class. But they had been cast out of the main political stream

after a long history of continuous political warfare among the leading *Yang-ban* class.

Those scholars in search of a new truth were called '*sil-hak-pa*'. *Sil-hak* literally means 'study of what is real'.

Henceforth, some proceeded to study Western science, philosophy, and religion. This was how they came across the Catholic literature.

### Church Founded by the Lay Apostolate

Laymen introduced the Catholic faith into Korea, and they founded the Korean Church.

The manner Catholicism entered Korea through laymen is unique in the whole of Church history.

But this foundation was not different from the foundation of the House of God laid in Rome, in Beijing, or any other place in the whole world. It was Jesus Christ Himself!

The Word of God they encountered through the Chinese Catholic literature was the very same Jesus Christ.

In 1784, Lee Sung Hoon was sent to Beijing by the early primitive community consisting of scholarly leaders. There he was baptised and given the Christian name of Peter.

Thus he was to serve as one small rock to be used in laying the foundation of the Korean Church.

Right after Peter Lee's return from Beijing, the other scholars were baptised by him.

After their baptism, they formed a Christian community and began to practice Christianity according to what they studied from the books: they observed Sundays and Feastdays reading the Gospel of the day.

They spent time together in meditating, praying, fasting, and in practising the Christian virtues.

The Korean lay leaders, who had heard the Good News wanted to experience the special Gift of God called the Seven Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Eucharist.

So they established a Hierarchy similar to that already established in the West. This they did solely based upon the knowledge they obtained from the books.

Consequently, they elected Kwon III Shin Francis-Xavier as their Bishop and Lee Sung Hoon Peter and ten other leaders of the Church became priests.

The elected Bishop was in charge of the overall administration of the Church. All the unordained 'priests' proceeded to carry out their ministries.

They dispensed the Seven Sacraments and preached the Good News with great success. This they did in good faith, and their work bore substantial fruit during the two years of their unordained Hierarchy.

They taught catechism and baptised more than 4,000 converts throughout the country 11 years before the first missionary priest ever set foot in Korea in 1795.

They celebrated Mass and dispensed the Sacraments of marriage, reconciliation, and anointing of the sick, following the description in the Rites book.

Meanwhile, doubts began to arise among them about the validity of their Hierarchy system. So they decided to seek consultation from the Bishop in China.

In 1789, they sent a letter written by Peter Lee to Beijing. In it he explained how he ended up saying Mass on behalf of the congregation, and how they eventually ended up with ten more priests.

When they learned, to their dismay, that they had erred by establishing

their own Hierarchy, they publicly confessed their errors in front of the whole congregation.

The virtues of humility, and obedience they practised are still carried on among all lay leaders in Korea.

### The Church Assisted by the Missionary Arm of the Mother Church

When the missionary priests finally came to Korea, they were respected and loved as spiritual Fathers.

Many laymen were martyred because they had either invited, hidden or protected foreign missionaries.

When Fr. James Chou entered Korea as the first missionary priest in 1794, he discovered to his amazement that Christianity was deeply and widely rooted in the good soil of the Korean faithful.

By the time Fr. Chou was martyred in 1801, the congregation had grown to more than 10,000.

In 1836 three faithful Korean boys were chosen and sent to the Seminary in China in order to fulfil the dream of Korean priests.

One of the three was St Andrew Kim Dae Kun who was ordained as the first Korean priest in 1845.

After many attempts, he was finally able to re-enter his country as an ordained priest. Within a year of his ministry in Korea, he was captured by the Government and executed at the age of 25.

His tremendous love for God and his great sufferings for the faithful kindled the love of all Korean Catholics. This year, 1996, is the 150th anniversary of his martyrdom.

Of the three boys, one died in China due to illness. The third one, Fr. Choi Yang Up, was finally ordained in 1849, much later than Kim Dae Kun, but he was able to minister in Korea for ma-



ny years until he passed away through illness.

Though he was not a martyr, his life of ministry was the life of carrying the cross of self-sacrifice.

## Persecutions

The first persecutions took place in 1791, because of the refusal to participate in the traditional ancestral reverence rite which was regarded as idolatry by the Catholic Church.

As a matter of fact, many of those young scholars who initially led the Church turned away from Christianity at the news of the persecution.

Some had to confront and decide whether to choose parents or an invisible God.

But eventually many young Christians went back to the Church, and were subsequently martyred.

There were still many others who stayed within the Church with fortitude and were martyred.

And they had to face the invisible God in this utter silence.

Had they not heard the voice of the Lord who spoke in the middle of the utter silence they could not have faced death so courageously, when all that was needed in order to remain alive was simply to deny Christianity.

The fairly benevolent Government was ready to forgive all the prisoners' previous sins, only if they denied the false religion.

Some scanty evidence shows that the martyrs' testimonies were almost an exact duplication of the Scriptures, homilies, or the essence of Catholic faith, as found in the Christian books they learned by heart.

Does this mean they were simply mouthing what they had memorised earlier? Absolutely not! Examine all the testimonies made by Jesus Christ

Himself. Wasn't he repeating the Old Testament verses in most cases?

The testimonies of the martyrs truly reveal that the Word and the Truth as taught in the books had become 'one' with those martyrs.

They were taught by the Word of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit recalled those teachings at the moment they were needed most.

In Truth, the martyrs had been nurtured by the Word of God.

There were four Great Persecutions as well as many smaller ones all over the country.

During such a long period of persecution since the birth of the Church, what was the main force behind the remarkable faith of the Koreans?

As we will examine in the rest of this paper, the Word of God was indeed playing the most important role.

During one hundred years of persecution, tens of thousands of people were martyred.

In 1984, on the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Church, 103 martyrs were canonised.

Among them were six French missionaries. There are still numerous martyrs who have not been canonised yet.

They still remain 'silent' and 'nameless' in the manner they carried on their lives in the Lord.

## 3. God speaks in Korean

The Korean language system is totally different from the Chinese one.

Moreover Chinese characters are so hard to learn that the illiteracy level was very high even in China.

In 1492, Korean characters called Hangul was invented by the young

scholars specially commissioned by King Sejong to invent phonetic characters to translate verbal Korean into writing.

One of the purposes of inventing such phonetic characters was to make it easy for the average person to read and learn from books.

Indeed, Hangul is so easy to learn. It was so easy that learned Koreans looked down on people who read or wrote in Korean.

Only women and the lower classes of society used it in those days. But Hangul certainly played a crucial role in spreading the Gospel so rapidly to all classes of people.

Whenever and wherever there were no clergymen available, the early Korean Church could not rely on just the Liturgy of the Word for their Sunday service.

In addition, the Gospel was used in daily meditation and prayer.

In the process, the early lay leaders soon realised that access to the Gospel and the spiritual teachings written in Chinese was limited only to the privileged males who belonged to the highest social class.

Thus, they saw the need to translate those books in Chinese, so that any Korean could learn from these books.

Consequently, from the very beginning of the faith community, Chinese literature began to be translated into Korean. The translation ministry made up of scholarly lay leaders began in 1787, only three years after the founding of the Church.

Within two years, books written in Korean were being distributed to outlying country districts.

This fact is corroborated by a Government document of the time in which the Cho-Sun Government officials express great concern at the least edu-



## Ars Sacra Pekinensis

### Christmas themes in Chinese picture language

In the autumn of 1930 an Art Academy was opened at Fu Jen, the Catholic University in Beijing. Here, during the following years, art students and young painters created works that translated the content of the Christian faith into Chinese picture language. A great promoter of the Academy was Celso Costantini, the Papal Nuntius and himself an artist and art critic. He saw in the promotion of Chinese Christian art an outstanding path to the inculturation of Christianity in the Chinese situation. At the instigation of the art teacher and Steyler (SVD) missionary, Berchmans Brückner, there developed from 1934 on the occasion of a yearly Christmas exposition numerous Chinese Christmas motifs. In these pages we would like to offer you three of these as a Chinese Christmas present.

*Annunciation*, Wang Su-Ta, 1946, on silk, 105 cm high.

The Annunciation scene takes place in a prosperous setting, possibly the palace garden of the emperor. In this way the artist wishes to suggest the grandeur of the event. The terrace opens on to bamboo and maple trees, symbols of life. The scroll with its rod lying on the expensive table indicates the education of the young woman. Mary is inclined toward the messenger of God and open to the message. The Spirit of God, presented in the traditional symbol of the dove, binds together the two figures.







*Birth of Christ*, Wang Su-Ta, 1946, on silk, 120 cm high.

A landscape scene in which the mountain rises up to bind together heaven and earth while at the same time opening itself to the mystery. The evergreen pine tree and the early blossoms of the plum tree still under the snow are signs of the promise. Likewise the flexible bamboo, still bent from the weight of the snow, will soon stand erect. It symbolizes the new life. The grotto offers protection and safety and signifies the center of the earth. So it is suggested that Christ, the Lord of the world and the central point of history, will be born in a cave. The message content of this picture is essentially determined by nature.

*Madonna with virgins making music*. Lukas Ch'en, 1938, on silk, 70x120.

The mother holds the child on a quilt (blanket?) of bird feathers, which suggests his celestial character. Around his neck the child wears a lock on a chain. According to an old Chinese custom, rich parents give their child to a poor woman. When the child is handed over, it receives the chain with the lock and the parents keep the key. When the child is grown, it is given back to the parents in a ceremony. The picture reminds one that the heavenly Father entrusted His Son to an earthly mother.

(Transl.: Mark Sheridan)





cated being attracted to the Western religion through the books written in Korean.

Of the 120 kinds of Chinese Christian book, 87 had been translated up to 1801.

Though as yet there was no complete translation of the Bible, the faithful were reading and learning by heart the collection of the Gospels from the liturgical books. The books were being copied by hand.

During the persecution, many hid the books like treasures, and would not reveal the location of the books even on pain of death.

This is how some of these valuable books were recovered from secret places in some old houses in the country.

The official Government Records show that the Christians were reading such books together even in the prison.

*Sung-kyoung-jik-hae*, after the title of the Chinese version, was one of the most important sources of the Word of God.

The original title of this book is believed to be *Sung-kyoung-jik-hae-kwang-ik* after the titles of two Chinese books mentioned above. This book combined most of the contents of the two Chinese books.

The book was meant to be the collection of Gospel readings that fall on Sundays and Feastdays, and thus omitted the retreat guide portion of the *Sung-kyoung-kwang-ik*.

Choi Chang Hyun, the author, completed the book in 1790. Though he did not belong to the highest class, he was well educated.

*Sung-kyoung-jik-hae* was only one of many books translated or written in Korean by the early Korean Church.

The total number of Korean books in existence by category was as many as 83 books in 128 volumes according to the Government list of censored books in the 1801 Great Persecution, (the number of copies made increases exponentially).

Most of the early Christians in Korea had never seen a priest, nor received Holy Communion, yet their faith was deeply rooted by their readings and hearings. Really their "faith [came] from what [was] heard" (cf. Rom 10:17).

#### 4. The fruit of the good news

*...and they bear fruits with patient endurance* (cf. Lk 8, 15).

The early Korean Church was begun by learned scholarly people who were mature enough not to look for a superstitious messiah.

They had zeal for social reform, the study of Western religion, as well as a genuine thirst for Truth. The Church then expanded to include converts from many different classes of people.

#### Love, Joy, and Peace

*The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (cf. Gal 5:22-23).

The Korean Church brought forth such fruits of the Holy Spirit. The most important fruit was Love. Love for God and love for neighbour are the two greatest commandments (cf. Mt 22:37-39).

Out of this, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control flowed. Joy and peace of the faithful was one of the most prominent characters of the martyrs.

Many non-believers, astonished to witness the serene joy and peace of the prisoners even unto the moment of their martyrdom, were led to inquire

about Christianity and to become converted themselves after hearing the Good News.

#### Challenge for Love of neighbour - Practice of Equality

Christianity provides quite a different view of human dignity because God created every human being, and God loved them all with a love immense enough to sacrifice the life of His only Son for all sinners. Many converts who joined the Church through the evangelisation effort of the early scholarly lay leaders were attracted by the actual practice of equality by even those who belonged to the highest Yang-Ban class.

What prompted the early scholarly lay leaders to practice equality from the beginning of the Church?

A Korean book entitled *Sin-Myung-Cho-Haeng* (*First Step to God's Commandment*) that was frequently read by the early Korean Christians wrote about fraternal love as follows:

*God created man in the likeness of His image, and adopted all as His children. This is so that all people may love each other universally like brothers for the sake of the Lord. Such love should solely be based upon the dignity of man. It is based on creation by God not on the personality, talent, or virtue of a specific person.*

They obviously read that God is the creator of all human beings and, as a matter of fact, of all creatures.

They also learned that God who is the Father of Jesus Christ is also the Father of all people who believe in Him.

They also learned that God sacrificed His own Son to save sinners, not only the righteous!

Thus any intelligent man who learns about this basic teaching of the Church can come to the conclusion that, if God created all, then all human beings should be treated as equal.



But what is remarkable is that these scholars immediately practiced what they learned from the Gospel.

I strongly believe that the Asian tradition of disciplined reading, that demands meeting, eating, and practising the Scriptures with the whole body, played the most important role in this regard.

In addition, these scholars were those who became so disenchanted with the empty philosophy of the main stream scholars of the time.

They also belonged to the politically oppressed because of their surnames, or their birth places, etc., even though they were from the *Yang-ban* class. Thus, their heart was with the oppressed and the underprivileged.

***While the West was fighting for Equality, Liberty and Fraternity in the French Revolution the Korean Christians were practicing equality fuelled by totally different motives.***

Consequently, the first thing they did was to translate the Chinese books they read into the Korean language in order to spread their knowledge even to the unlearned lower classes and women.

The second thing they did was to practice equality. Korean Catholics traditionally address their fellow faithful as friends (*Gyo-woo*) or brothers or sisters.

They opened the meeting places to women, and the low-class people which was strictly prohibited at the

time. Some went so far as to release their own slaves.

For example, Kim Kun Shin liberated all his slaves in 1790. This was 104 years before the law prohibiting private ownership of slaves was issued in 1894.

In the 18th century, Korea maintained a strict social class system. There was severe discrimination against lower class people. Lower class people were not allowed to be educated, and were precluded from professional occupation that guaranteed power, and money.

Women were also heavily discriminated against. The Cho-Sun Government at the time was outraged to learn that in this foreign religious sect, women and men, higher class, and lower class people could remain in the same room. They compared these Christians to animals who do not know any shame.

The wide circulation of Korean Catholic books, coupled with the actual practice of equality by the early Christians, was one of the main factors for the rapid spread of the Good News, despite a series of persecutions. Some upper class converts immediately began to practice equality.

Women also played a very important role from the beginning. Kang Wan Sook Colomba was one of the devoted lay leaders. She was martyred with many other 'anonymous' women.

This practice of equality among the early Korean Catholics needs to be compared with the cause of equality that was being called for in the West at the same time as the Korean persecution.

While the West was fighting for *Equality, Liberty, and Fraternity* fuelled by hatred against the governing class, and love for individual rights which caused the French Revolution, the Christians in this small country in

the Far East were practising equality fuelled by totally different motives.

In Korea it was the virtue of love, that results from obedience to the Lord's commandment, which eventuated in the silent and anonymous revolution of equality.

***Challenge for Love of God - Carrying the Cross***

*You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (cf. Mt 22:37).*

From its birth, the Cho-Sun Church was challenged to obey this commandment to the ultimate degree of perfection. People had to choose between life and death. Tens of thousands were martyred throughout the series of persecutions.

What led them to deny their very lives for the sake of the Name of the Lord? A traditional value system that honoured truthfulness - loyalty to the king, filial piety to parent, trustworthiness between friends, courage as a warrior, and generosity toward all - coupled with the traditional virtue of fortitude, must have played the most important role.

The spirituality of our early martyrs needs further study. This is a difficult task since there are not many written records on them.

One very important source for early Korean Church history is *L'Histoire de l'Eglise de Corée* (History of Korean Catholicism) written in 1874 by French missionary Dallet. His writing was based on the collection of the Korean French missionaries' letters and their reports preserved in their Archives.

But even from a very limited source of information we can clearly see that early Korean Christians were being fed generously by the Word of God. And the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit had opened their eyes in the manner

the risen Lord opened the eyes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:31). Let me quote from Dallet's own writings.

*Even with such a long period of imprisonment, they lived lives that shook everyone including non-Christians... At night they turned on the lamp, and read the Scripture together, and offered prayers aloud. Nearby residents who could hear them from outside could not help feeling strange. They were wondering from where those prisoners were drawing joy, peace, and harmony.*

What scriptures were people reading even while they were imprisoned in 1815? We can guess that it must have been the *Sung-kyung-jik-hae* written by Choi Chang Hyun. Let me finish this section with another quotation from Dallet:

*The Lord who is the Way and the Life completely transforms the heart of people who receive the Word. This Word makes the coward the bravest knight of the Lord, and the idol worshippers Saints, providing them with the courage to be able to say boldly "No, I cannot betray the Lord". to the government officials, and even to their secular king. Such a thing has never been heard of in the East. This Word makes those ignorant people to know who the true Lord is, and what man has been called to. These two are most important Truth that people had to know and live in.*

## V. EPILOGUE

Any disciple of Jesus is the one who bore his cross and followed after Jesus. Let us for the moment forget all the information we know about what the cross is like, and become like a little child who never saw a cross. Let us call it the 'thing'. 'Disciple' means pupil. Jesus is the teacher.

Then 'bearing the thing and coming after the teacher' should mean going to the class room. The 'thing' then is the textbook that students carry. Thus

setting aside for the moment what we know about the 'cross', this 'thing' must refer to the book, that is the Bible itself.

Indeed, the 'cross' was the very Bible that all the martyrs carried with them in their private 'retreat' with our ultimate retreat master, Jesus Christ. He Himself had gone through the retreat of utter silence and selflessness on the Cross. He alone can guide us through it. The cross indeed summarises the whole Bible, the whole prayer, and the whole retreat that all of us has to go through. In the cross is the silence, namelessness, faith, hope, and, most important of all, the Love. In the cross is the seed of Resurrection.

Indeed, there is no difference between the cross and the resurrection. The cross is the resurrection, and resurrection is the cross. All becomes one in the cross. I become Jesus, and Jesus becomes me in the cross. And the Holy Trinity is in the cross.

In those moments of agony, and suffering, the Korean martyrs, who were not learned but like little children, learned the whole Truth in the Bible from the crosses they were carrying. In their crosses, they followed not only the example of Jesus Christ but also the scripture reading guidelines by the great Asian sages.

Let me finish by delivering a letter written from a prison in Cho-Sun in 1896, right before the prisoner was martyred. He had written many letters in Latin, and in Chinese. But this letter was the only one written in *Hangul* since it was addressed to his unlearned 'friends' and 'brothers'. This young man was only 26 years old at the time. His occupation was a priest. His name is none other than St Kim Dae Kun Andrew.

This letter, I believe, was addressed not only to his Church members, but is being addressed to every Christian. His message is very simple, but very authoritative. His exhortation is very direct, and goes right to the core of

the message. It is such a short letter, but it encompasses every Truth revealed in the Scripture. Truly this is an Asian who learned and practised not only the whole teachings of the Holy Church but also all the learning guidelines of the Asian sages:

*To my Gyo-woos (friends). My beloved friends, the Lord of Heaven has created the Heaven and Earth in the beginning, and created us human beings in the likeness of his image. Silently meditate where lies His purpose and intention. Everything around us, if you think hard about them, is empty, and pitiful. If our eyes are not opened, and we cannot know the Lord of Heaven who is our Creator, and the only One that truly exists, while we are in this chaotic and empty world, what is the meaning of our being born and being alive?*

*Solely by the Grace of the Lord, we were born in this world, became baptised, and obtained the adorable new (Christian) name as a member of the Holy Church. But if we do not bring forth the fruits that are proper for the new name, what is the use of having such a name?...*

*Even our Cho-Sun Church, since the spreading of the Holy Church to this country, has been bruised and battered by the repeated windstorms during the last 50 to 60 years, but our Brothers in the Lord still survive....*

*Persecution is the trial permitted by our Lord of Heaven. You can surely store up virtues and merits if you win victory over the Evil and the world. Do not be afraid of the calamity, Do not lose bravery, do not retreat in serving the Lord, but only follow in the footsteps of the Saints to the Glory of the Holy Church, and prove that you are the loyal and faithful soldier of the Lord, and the truthful citizen of the Lord in Heaven! ...*

*My beloved friends, I anticipate meeting you in Heaven, and together derive eternal joy from limitless Blessing. I will receive you there with the warmest embrace.* ♦





**The Christian in today's world** must spare no effort to penetrate, through both critical and fundamentalist exegesis of the Bible, to grasp the new concepts of the magnificent imagery of the Bible and its striking expression in the language of symbols. It is impossible to read the Bible with this dual purpose, transcending both literal and allegorical conceptions, without eventually reaching to the depth of its divine meaning. For this neither the analytical nor the apologetic understanding of the Bible can suffice. A more intensive and intuitive attitude is required, corresponding more closely to the real content of the Bible. Only this can achieve a rounded view and approach that meaning of the Bible which transcends reasoning. The Bible is not like other books. It is beyond all literature, and its substance cannot be grasped through any scientific method. Pascal is entirely correct in saying that 'Holy Scripture is a science not of the mind but of the heart, and is intelligible only to those whose heart is true' (*The Legacy of a Great Heart*).

Walter Nigg

(Transl.: Henry Wansbrough)

## **Logos (λογος) and dao (道) - on the translation of Christian concepts into Chinese**

The subject of the contribution of Sr. Maura Cho was the living testimony to faith of the Korean Christians. Whoever bears witness to his faith, also makes use of words, concepts and pictures.

It is particularly difficult to find the right terms when it is a question of expressing an experience of faith in a foreign language, of translating it into another cultural, social and religious context. How was the faith of the first Christians from a Hebrew-Jewish cultural context to be translated into the language of Greek philosophy? What picture is to be found for the God of Jesus Christ in a culture that does not know the western concept of person?

In Asia there existed highly developed religious and philosophical systems

long before the first contacts with Christianity. Should the Christian missionaries make use of their religious concepts or invent new ones?

The question of the translation of important theological concepts was a central one from the beginning of Christianity in China and remains one today.

The Jesuit missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries investigated not only the classic Chinese writings but also the monotheistic concepts of God in Judaism and Islam in an effort to find an adequate translation of the name of God.

The rites controversy, which touched on the question of how far Chinese ceremonies could be taken over in

the context of the inculturation of Christian faith, was to a large extent a controversy over terminology.

Against the classical Chinese terms 天 (*Tian - Heaven*) and 上帝 (*Shangdi - sublime ruler*), the term 天主 (*Tianzhu - Lord of Heaven*) finally gained acceptance.

The combined sign 天主 (*Tianzhu*) was more or less newly invented and many philologists and theologians found it a rather weak solution in comparison with the two terms from the classical Chinese literature, which were well known.

Even today Protestant Christians use 上帝 (*Shangdi*) and Catholic Christians 天主 (*Tianzhu*) as the designation for the one God.

Does the use of an already existing concept involve above all the danger of misunderstanding or of syncretism? Or does it offer the possibility of connecting with already available experience, the chance of enrichment, and is this a good way to inculturation?

Since this matter is not restricted to the translation of individual religious technical terms but touches on the whole religious discourse and the translation of one's own faith experience into the context of another's, it is highly relevant for biblical pastoral work.

The following contribution by Jost Zetsche on the translation of the Greek term λογος into Chinese appeared in 'Fallbeispiel China', Steyler Verlag, 1996 and is reproduced here in excerpts. It not only sharpens our awareness of the translation problems.

On the basis of the investigation of the conceptual pair λογος - dao, one may discern also the possibilities that the use of central concepts of the religious vocabulary of the culture being addressed can have.

AMS

(Transl.: Mark Sheridan)

## Logos λογος and dao (道)

No definite conclusion has yet been reached about the origin of the Johannine concept of λογος, but it is clear that John chose this concept to build a bridge between Jewish and Hellenistic thought.

The Greek word λογος, originally meaning 'word', 'speech', 'saying', was linked by Heraclitus (C. 500 BC) to its derivatives 'teaching', 'sense', and eventually 'world principle' and 'truth'.

The Stoic school of thought, originating 200 years later, used the word λογος to convey a 'world reason'. As such, it was responsible for order in the cosmos but also dwelt within every human being and determined reasonable and ethical behaviour.

Philo (C. 50 BC), a Hellenistic-Jewish religious philosopher, seized on this sense and used λογος to represent a mediator between God and human beings. Λογος, the 'eldest child of God', on the one hand shared with God the task of creating and conserving the world, and on the other dwelt also in the human soul, especially in that of the wise.

It was this λογος which made it possible both to distinguish between good and evil and to come near to God.

Dao developed into one of the most central concepts of classical Chinese philosophy. Traditionally this is the starting-point for an extension of the meaning to 'way', 'highroad', developing to include 'lead' and 'learn' and even 'say' and 'speak'.

Dao acquires the meaning 'method' as early as the early Zhou-era (1122-255 BC), in the Book of Songs (*Shijing*).

By this, and its derivative meaning, 'the (true) Way', 'moral principle', dao becomes one of the most central concepts of the Confucian writings.

In the daoist writings, and especially in *Daodejing*, it acquires a meaning which is difficult to comprehend. It extends far beyond the Confucian meaning, and acquires creative qualities.

An idea so difficult to tie down but yet so rich in content was ideally suited to any number of other religions, to represent the central point of their current teaching.

Buddhists enriched the concept of dao with new meaning by using it to translate *bodhi* or 'enlightenment', while other religions used it rather in its original sense of 'the (true) Way', though applied to their own system.

Thus the Jewish dao - a central concept in the surviving Chinese Jewish writings - is strikingly similar to the dao of the Confucians, and even becomes the name given to the Jewish lawbook, the Torah (*Daojing*).

However, despite the prominent position of this concept, dao never becomes a divine name among the Chinese Jews, notwithstanding claims to the contrary.

In Islamic writings and in translations of the Qur'an dao occurs with similar frequency, used mostly to mean 'the (true Islamic) Way'.

The Nestorian Church also uses the word dao for "the way" and thus not in the daoist sense. Similar usages of dao occur also elsewhere in the Nestorian writings.

The Jesuits, who entered into such intense dialogue with Confucianism, also took over from them the term dao, meaning 'the (true Catholic) Way'. Ricci wrote, 'Like my three or four friends (= Jesuits), they turned with their whole hearts towards the Way (dao), to serve God.'

The Figuristes<sup>1</sup> by contrast believed that they could see the Logos-idea already in the dao of the *Daodejing*. Nevertheless no Catholic translation

of the Bible or any part thereof used dao to translate λογος for almost 200 years after this 'discovery' of the Figuristes.

All the same, a corresponding tradition continued in the Catholic Church. So an anonymous author in the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner* for 1818 (p. 83) reports that 'a Missionary of the Romish Church has given it as his opinion that it [dao] corresponds to the λογος (sic) of St. John'.

The early Catholic translations use the word *wuerpeng*, a transcription of the Latin *Verbum*, as it is still used in translations of this century.

Isolated voices were raised in the Protestant community against the translation of λογος by dao, although many missionaries were almost euphoric about this possibility.

They saw in the concepts λογος and dao a point of contact between Christianity and the Chinese religions which regarded dao as their climax. Through its gradual development in Greek and Jewish philosophy, λογος had become a suitable 'word vessel'.

Similarly dao, through its recent development in the *Daodejing*, had achieved the necessary depth for it to serve as a translation for λογος.

Because of this dao had broadened its sense and brought the Chinese religions to their fulfilment, achieving the fullness of revelation in Christ, just like Judaism.

Unusual as this argumentation might seem, it made clear that translation of the Bible should be understood as more than a mere transference of the original meaning.

A small group of Catholic philologists and theologians saw in this translation an opportunity for the 'fertilisation of Asian theology through Taoism'. They regarded dao as a thoroughly suitable thread for Christian revelation.



They reached the conclusion that *dao* in Chinese thought was the best translation of λογος, and showed that the analogy of the two ideas was also most helpful for the mission.

Nevertheless this analogy might not be used either in preaching or in catechesis because of the danger of misunderstanding.

Among Catholic translation only Xujiahui (1953) and *The Jerusalem Bible* (1985) took over *dao* as a translation of λογος.

Also the Ecumenical Translation of the Bible does use *dao* in the Gospel of John.

It is not the task of this essay to make any decision about the analogy between *dao* and λογος.

But it can nevertheless be demonstrated that with the repeated translation of λογος by *dao* the same step has been taken as was taken by John in his use of λογος in his Gospel and Letters: namely, the central concept of the philosophical and religious thought-world of the corresponding culture was adopted to render the central concept of Christian theology.

In European cultures translations like 'Wort', 'word' or '*Verbum*' had not been able to take over concepts which already had a philosophical or religious sense.

Only elevated cultures like that of China or ancient Greece had such a concept to offer.

<sup>1</sup> The Figuristes were a group of Jesuits round the missionaries Bouvet, Foucquet and Prémare in the 18th Century, who saw the messianic figure of Jesus Christ prefigured in Chinese history. This was understood as a message both for China and for Europe.

(Transl.: Henry Wansbrough)

## Follow-up to Hong Kong

### IN SEARCH OF THE MEANING OF SCRIPTURE

#### Guide lines for 'spiritual reading of Scripture' (*lectio divina*) according to the fourfold meaning of Scripture

**Wilhelm Egger, bishop of Bozen-Brixen  
President of the Catholic Biblical Federation**

We human beings are - often unconsciously - troubled by the question of the meaning of life.

The basic questions are, as the German philosopher Immanuel Kant put it: What can I know, what can I hope, what must I do, who am I?

For us Christians Holy Scripture is the Word of God which helps us to understand the meaning of life.

So as to understand the meaning of Holy Scripture, we need the help of the Holy Spirit (who has inspired the authors of Holy Scripture); but we also need our own effort.

Here we benefit from the rich experiences of the Church Fathers, monks, holy men and women, of the many who in the course of centuries have read the Bible.

Spiritual reading of Scripture (*lectio divina*) means a specific form of lis-

tening to and relationship with Holy Scripture.

It is (according to Cardinal Martini) a question of regular practice of listening to the Word of God, privately or in community, it is not listening to a sermon, but a personal listening and a personal acquiring of the Word of God.

*Lectio divina* has an inner order. It is a journey with definite stations where the Christian stops. These stations point to a definite sequence: prayer - reading - meditation - comparison - contemplation - action (in Latin: oratio, lectio, meditatio, collatio, contemplatio, operatio).

If one keeps to this order nothing important will be overlooked, and one will avoid a one-sided reading of Holy Scripture.

One of the methods developed over centuries and which the catechism of



the catholic church (109-119) recommends again will be presented as follows: reading of Scripture in the fourfold scriptural meaning.

This method seems to me particularly appropriate since it offers many indications, how we may comprehend the wealth of scriptural meanings.

The particularity of this way is summarised in a medieval distich:

*Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.*

"The letter teaches the events, what you have to believe, allegory (in German better: vision of faith), morality (better direction of living), what you have to do, what you should aim for, anagogia (leading upwards)."

This method answers people's important basic questions. This way of being concerned with the text leads to understanding the text, to faith, love and hope.

Along all the stations of this way a Christian is occupied, in different manner and always anew, with the Biblical text, he stops so as to renew faith, love and hope.

## 1. In search of the original meaning of the text

*Littera* - letter (attention to the text)

At the first station all attention is directed to the 'letter', that is the literal meaning.

At each hearing of Scripture one has to pay attention to the literal meaning of Scripture.

This can be achieved by stock taking'. We pay attention to people acting, references to places, time, etc.

Reading alone or in a group attention to the original meaning can mainly be reached by seeking an answer to some simple questions. Who - what -

why - when - where - how - by what means?

- Who acts?

- What are the relations between the people acting?

- What are the places mentioned in the text?

- What indications of time?

- What happens?

- What changes take place?

- What reasons for action become evident?

Aids:

Editions of the Bible with commentaries (e.g. the *New Jerusalem Bible*), dictionaries, various introductions.

## 2. In search of knowing Christ

*Allegory* - vision of faith

At the second station (*Allegoria* in Latin) we are invited to a vision of faith. It is a matter of discovering the secret of God's and Christ's work.

Now the same passage will be read in the wider context of a book, a letter, indeed the whole of Scripture.

One looks very carefully at the content and unity of the whole of Scripture and faith, with reference to the living tradition of the whole church and the connection of the truths of faith with each other, in the whole plan of salvation (cf. Constitution on Divine Revelation 12).

In order to comprehend the main lines of God's workings and the lasting meaning of the text the following questions may be helpful:

- In what wider connection of divine salvation is this event or word to be seen?

- What texts of the Bible with similar contents come to mind?

- Which similar events can be found in Holy Scripture and in the life of the church?

Aids:

Aids in order to comprehend the main lines of the action of divine salvation: references to parallel passages (in many editions of the Bible, especially the *New Jerusalem Bible*), concordances (index of headings for Holy Scripture), a (small) Bible lexicon.

This step invites us to faith. Therefore one should conclude with a confession of faith.

## 3. In search of 'help in life' and 'direction of life'

*Sensus moralis* - direction of life

At the third station of *lectio divina* there is the so-called *sensus moralis*. Nowadays one could translate it as direction of life in the Old Testament meaning: not a command, but a directive so that people can live, in other words, guidelines of living in the sense of help in living.

The Biblical text, in this third station, becomes a mirror through which we understand our own existence better by comparing it with what Scripture says. We try to recognize what we are ourselves and what we can do and ought to do.

So as to understand better daily life and events, we put the following questions:

- Where do I stand?

- How is my life and my service?

- For which situation in life is this Word of God significant?

One can also follow a kind of psychological exegesis:

- Which of the characters in the story do I resemble?

- Which of the problems related in the text touch me most personally?





Aids:

Looking at the world and our daily experiences, also looking at a newspaper can help such an interpretation.

#### 4. Seeking the grounds for hope

*Anagogia* - sense of direction

At the fourth station a Christian pays particular attention as to how the Biblical text answers the fundamental question: what can I do, or rather better, in what direction can I hope? Biblical texts often point to the completion of history and life.

They direct our look upwards, as the word *anagogia* indicates. Through this effort one reads and questions the Biblical text against the back-

ground of our present problems of meaning and of the future.

Again some questions can be helpful:  
- What grounds for confidence are mentioned in the text?  
- What hope can be rightfully ours considering the present situation?

In prayer we thank God for what he has told us and ask his help for our doing.

*Merciful God you have revealed yourself to us,  
We thank you for what you have told us,  
and ask your help to do it.*

Feast of St. Francis, 4 October 1997

(Transl.: Mme Dubois)

worked out or how it can be made fruitful for Bible study.

If the original meaning of the text is not grasped, no actualization is possible in an appropriate way ('The Interpretation of the Bible in the church' IV A 2).

#### 2. Criterion taking into consideration the unity of Scripture

A method of Bible study is appropriate if the unity of Scripture is taken into account (DV).

This means, among other things, that the choice of texts must correspond to the assertion of the whole Bible.

#### 3. Criterion with regard to the tradition of the church

A method of Bible study is appropriate if the exegesis and the history of the church's action is taken into account (DV). Considering the Church Fathers' exegesis and also the commentaries as experienced in the life of saints and the witness of martyrs is an approach to the meaning of Scripture. For many centuries the method of the fourfold meaning of Scripture has formed an approach to Scripture.

#### 4. Criterion of considering *Analogia fidei*

A method of Bible study is appropriate if it does justice to the statement of the whole faith (DV). The statement of the church is found in the confessions of faith, in the liturgical texts, in the church's decisions. These are points of orientation for personal reading and scriptural interpretation.

#### 5. Criterion for consideration of Bible and Liturgy

A method of Bible study is appropriate if it shows those elements which are

### CRITERIA FOR JUDGING METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

**Wilhelm Egger, bishop of Bozen-Brixen  
President of the Catholic Biblical Federation**

Besides scholarly methods of exegesis there are a number of methods for practical Bible study. In each of those methods it is attempted to uncover the wealth of the text.

Scholarly methods as well as practical ones in Bible study privilege definite points of view, and one should take care to see that the methods are appropriate to the Biblical text.

In the Catholic Church the Second Vatican Council puts forward such criteria for judgement (Dei Verbum, 12, 'The Interpretation of the Bible in the church'. Document of the Biblical Commission).

At Bogotá the CBF worked out a number of criteria.

Below I present, by way of a list, some criteria which enable one to tell if a method is appropriate for Bible study.

#### 1. Criterion concerning the necessary attention to the literal meaning of Scripture

A method for Bible study is appropriate if it enables the reader to work out the original meaning of the text. In this criterion one has to determine how far exegetical knowledge could be

used in readings in eucharistic celebration, and in the liturgy.

#### Two Quotations:

The most effective liturgical approach to the Bible is the Liturgy of the Word, particularly if it takes place within the framework of the mass: 'That the Word of the Lord may spread quickly, and be received with honour' (2 Thess. 3,1). The Bible in the life of the Church. Pastoral proclamation of the Episcopal Commission for the Doctrine of Faith and Catechesis.

The lectionary - universal handbook for catechesis of all the people (John Paul II to the bishops of North Eastern Italy, 29.1.1991).

### 6. Criterion in relation to-day's world and its situations

A method of Bible study is appropriate if it includes reflection on the world in which we live (cf. Bogotá Part 3). Questions of ecology and feminism should be taken into account (cf. Bogotá).

### 7. Consideration of the necessary participation of those participating, men and women

A method of Bible study is appropriate if women and men participating are allowed to put forward their experiences. The many people interested (priests, laity, specialists, the needy, etc.) should take part.

### 8. Consideration for feelings

A method is appropriate if it takes into account the feelings of the participants.

Something subjective exists only if it is related to emotion (Wink). ◆

(Transl.: Mme Dubois)

## Life of the Federation

### Courses

#### **DEI VERBUM Course**

The next *DEI VERBUM COURSE* in Nemi (Rome) will be held from Wednesday, August 12, 1998 to Saturday, December 12, 1998.

The cost of the course - boarding and lodging and some handouts - is 7.000 US dollars. Some partial and full scholarships are available.

The deadline for registration is May 15, 1998. Early registration is advisable.

Missionari Verbiti  
Director *Dei Verbum*  
Via de Laghi 52  
I-00040 Nemi (Roma)  
Italy

#### **MINISTERS OF THE WORD Course**

The annual Course *MINISTERS OF THE WORD* of the *EAPI* will take place from June 29, 1998 to October 24 1998.

The course outline includes the following elements: personal, cultural and pastoral contexts, theological reflections covering Old and New Testament themes, the Church's view of scripture and biblical hermeneutics, pastoral skills training.

The cost of the course is 3.300 US dollars.

East Asian Pastoral Institute  
P. O. Box 221  
U. P. Campus  
1101 Quezon City  
Philippines

#### **Bible correspondence course in Tamilnadu**

The St. Paul's Bible Institute in Poonamallee, India, is conducting a Bible Correspondence Course for adults.

It covers the whole Bible with 21 booklets prepared by Bible scholars and these are sent to the candidates in two year's period.

About 2500 people in Tamilnadu and 400 people in Malaysia are undergoing this course. Twice there will be contact seminars in four centers of Tamilnadu.

The first cycle of these seminars is held on November 16, 1997 at Chennai and Trichy and on January 4, 1998 at Madurai and Palayamkottai.

St. Paul's Bible Institute  
Poonamallee  
Chennai - 600 056  
India



The Final Statement of the V Plenary Assembly in Hong Kong has appeared in Thai. J. M. Thasanai Komkris from the Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Training Center in Nakhonpathom, Thailand did the translation.

The whole New Testament in Thai translation is now ready for publication.

### ASIIPA COURSE IN THAILAND

Headed by the Pastoral Resource Center of Bangkok based at the Baan Phu Waan Center, the first of the series of three national workshops on

the "Asian Integrated Pastoral Approach" (AsIIPA) was held September 8-13, 1997. The 48 participants, the majority of whom were lay people, came from 6 Thai dioceses.

The first workshop focused on the vision of Church as communion of communities, a participatory Church, as spelled out by the Asian bishops in the Bandung 5th FABC Plenary Assembly.

Emphasis was placed on Gospel sharing, using the 7 steps Lumko method.

The next meetings will take place in March and September 1998.

carry it on. For the next three years 1998, 1999, 2000, they plan:

- to carry on the translation and detailed annotation of the Pentateuch and the Historical Books;
- to prepare the integral edition of the Bible with introduction and detailed annotation for the year 2000;
- to provide materials for biblical study by publishing handbooks written in Vietnamese or translated from other languages;
- to undertake the Vietnamese translation of the documents of the Second Vatican Council (there is one which is not satisfactory).

(Transl.: Sr. Emmanuel)

## Translations

### Malaysia: Bible in local language

A revised edition of the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia is now on sale at parishes in the Dioceses of Kota Kinabalu and Keningau.

Complete with the Old and New Testaments and the Deuterocanonicals, the Alkitab Berita Baik version which is sold at RM 35 each, was published by The Bible Society of Malaysia. (CATHOLIC SABAH)

### Vietnam: The translation of the Old Testament

The team "Liturgy of Hours" hopes to publish the integral edition of the Bible

with minimal footnotes at the end of this year. During the last six years, the team has not only translate the Old Testament, it has also carried out many works in the biblical and liturgical fields: introduction and detailed annotation of the New Testament, Prophetic Books, Poetical Books; translation of the second reading in the four volumes of The Liturgy of Hours; translation of the Ritual of the Marriage Service and the Ritual of the Funeral Service.

Apart from this teamwork, most of the team members have other responsibilities in the Christian community: training in religious communities, pastoral ministry, teaching, management.

Because they are convinced of the value of this teamwork, they want to

## Notices

### China: Shanghai Press expanded

The extension of the diocesan printing house in Qibao, a suburb of Shanghai, was blessed April 6, 1997 by Bishop Josef Homeyer of Hildesheim, Germany, chairman of the commission of Episcopates of the European Union (Com.E.C.E.).

The printing house supplies Bibles, Sunday missals and other religious publications countrywide. The expansion prepares the local Church for a wider audience.

Meanwhile, the Catholic printing house in Shanghai awaits government approval on the publication of *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Chinese version of the universal catechism promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992.

Fr. Ma Daqin, editor at Guang Qi Research Centre, hopes that the original text remains and that printing may be completed this year. ♦



## Bibliography

**Joseph Pathrapankal, Text and Context in Biblical Interpretation.** Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore 1993. 183 p.

The original context of a biblical text offers a historical access; contemporary praxis oriented theological reflection demands that the living context of the local church and the interpreter are equally important in the understanding of the same text. This book contains studies on the question of contextualization of biblical text.

The author who - as member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission - had participated in the preparation of the document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, is known for his struggle for a contextual theology and a contextual interpretation of the Bible. For Pathrapankal the context of interpretation is the decisive factor in the understanding of the biblical text.

### Contents:

1. Interpretation of the Word: God's Word, the Human Word and the Interpreter's Word
2. Bible and Inculturation
3. Biblical Foundations for a Theology of Religions
4. Religious Pluralism and the Universal Mediation of Christ: A Biblical Appraisal
5. Pneuma: Divine and Human in Christian Theology
6. Missionary Perspectives in the Acts of the Apostles
7. Conviction and Commitment: A Study of the Personality of Paul
8. Pauline Approach to sharing Worship: A Study on 1 Cor 8:1-11:1
9. From the Church of God to the House Church: A Study of Paul's over-

arching Reflections on the Church  
10. Priesthood of the New Covenant

**Tianti Shengjing fenxiang fangfa** (Himmelsleiter, Methods of *Bible Sharing*). Publisher: Tianzhujiao Xianggang Shengjing xiehui (Hong Kong Catholic Biblical Association).

First published: 18th June, 1993. New enlarged edition: 24th November, 1996. Advisers: Chen Zhiming, Chen Weitong. Editorial team: Fan Lizhen, Wu Peifang, Yang Jingfang, Lin Jinling, Liao Yanxia, Liang Jiayi, Mo Liqiong. Dust Cover: Liang Jiayi. 63 p.

This booklet is an introduction to Bible sharing methods. It has been edited by the Hong Kong Catholic Biblical Association and reprinted in 1996. To be ordered (in Chinese) with the HKCBA.

### Contents:

- I. How to read the Bible?
- II. Dispositions to take part in 'Bible Sharing'
- III. Methods of 'Bible Sharing'
1. Prayerful Reading of the Bible (*Lectio Divina*)
2. The Method of Five Questions
3. Step C
4. The Seven Step Method (1)
5. Tell a Story
6. 'Bible Sharing' in the Spirit of the Prophet Amos (the representative of justice); Rich and Poor
7. The Method of Triple Reading
8. Spiritual Method
9. Jesus Observed
10. Personal Surrender as a Starting-point
11. Method of 'See, hear, love'
12. [Marking the text with] Punctua-

tion-Marks and Symbols as a Method [of reading the Bible]

13. ['Bible Sharing' with the help of] Dramatic Presentation
14. Inductive Method
15. The Seven Step Method (2)
16. Reading the Bible by Choice of Themes
17. Guidelines for 'Bible Sharing' in Small Groups.

Each method is presented according to its purpose and its area of application, is explained a step at a time, and often also illustrated by an example.

**Sr. Y. Iglesias CM, Fr. S. Putzu SDB, The Promise. An Introduction to the Old Testament.** Word & Life Publications, Makati City (Philippines). Indian Edition published by Pastoral Centre, Meghalaya, 1996. 278 pages.

This book is the first of two parts: *The promise* and *The Fulfillment*. Its task: to present the Bible to catholic students in a simple manner and striking style. Illustrated with comics it is a book especially for young people.

This first part limits itself to giving a simple presentation of the Old Testament, first in general, then of each book. It makes no attempt to cover everything and does not want to replace the Bible.

The authors want to offer an effective introduction for the use in schools but also for students and teachers.

**The Word of God, Commentaries on the Sunday Readings.** Year I-III. Pastoral Centre, Meghalaya, 1995-1997.

A revised version of these commentaries (1 ed. 1982) which has appeared in English, Khasi, Garo and Tiddim. A new Assamese edition is in progress; an abridged version in Urdu language exists already.

The book primarily addressed to catechists, but also to priests, religious and lay people. ♦