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the Churches with a Chinese-Language Ministry

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Special Problems Affecting the Educational Task of the Churches with a Chinese-Language Ministry

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INTRODUCTION

This is a strange topic and a broad subject. The topic is strange because it uses the phrase "the churches with a Chinese-language ministry" rather than simply referring to "Chinese churches." For what this topic will discuss is not merely the church of China; it includes the churches in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and other places where Chinese is used. The topic is broad not only geographically, historically, and linguistically (because of many dialects) but also because the church's educational ministry involves the varied problems of objectives, agencies, materials, methods, teachers, philosophies of education, theological bases, and finally the differing policies of mission boards and local churches concerning the control and development of Christian education.

With so many problems involved, it is difficult to know where to begin. However, in order to have some basis for our discussion, we will make our presentation under these four headings:

1. Lessons from history.
2. Differences between traditional concepts of education and particularly *Christian* education.
3. Problems between mission boards, missionaries, and the local churches.
4. Needs of Chinese-language churches in Southeast Asia.

There are many problems under each of these headings, and many different solutions have been proposed for them. The main purpose of this paper is not to attempt to solve the problems but to point them out as starters for our discussion. Any suggested solutions in this paper are not meant to be final.

I. LESSONS FROM HISTORY

There is no definite answer to the question when Christianity first entered China. The churches in India traditionally believe that Christianity was brought to India by St. Thomas and to China by St. Bartholomew. Others believe that the Chinese and the Ethiopians came to know the Truth by the teaching of St. Thomas. Even if Thomas or Bartholomew had been in China, we have no evidence that deals with the problems of their teaching ministry, and therefore we cannot discuss what they might have done.

Li Wun-Pin in his book *Outlines of Chinese History* says that during the Eastern Han Dynasty (A. D. 25—220) two Syrian monks came to China, allegedly to learn the art of silk-making and to bring silkworms to the West. Except for this brief account, we have no further evidence of their activities. However, from this statement we can learn that they did not merely preach, but were interested in a mutual exchange of culture. They did not consider themselves better than others, but knew that China had something to offer them.

There is some evidence that Christianity had been in China long before the Nestorians came. There was a monument in Si Ang Fu, stating that in A. D. 635 the emperor sent Fang Shen-Ling to welcome Alopen, the Nestorian preacher. The Nestorians, according to Wang Tze Sin, in his book *An Outline of Chinese Christianity*, translated the Bible and healed the sick. We have no materials describing their educational ministry.

The Nestorians imitated the Buddhists in their methods, terminology, garb, temples, pictures and statues, and even in the shape of the cross, imitating the sign of the Buddha. In the Tang Dynasty (A. D. 618—906) the Taoists and Buddhists were in conflict, with each side attempting to use political means against the other, as Lo Hsiang Lin's study reveals. After Emperor Wu Tsung (A. D. 841—846) became an intimate friend with a Taoist, Tsao Hiu Chen, and had made Li Teh Yi, who was sympathetic with the Taoists, a prime minister, the emperor was influenced by them to pass an edict in 845 which called for the destruction of all the Buddhist temples and also ordered the monks and nuns to lead a secular life. Because the Nestorians so closely resembled the Buddhists, they suffered at the same time.

In 873 Emperor Hsieh Tsun (873 to 888) favored a eunuch, Tien Lin Tze; his favor resulted in resentment on the part of high officials and finally war, during which the emperor had to flee. After the conflict was over, however, as A. J. Garnier mentions in his book, *A Short History of Christianity*, a psychological reaction set in against all foreigners, for the emperor thought the uprising was instigated by them. As a result the Nestorians were re-

sisted. In the 13th century, although Marco Polo mentioned seeing some of the Nestorian temples, Nestorian Christianity itself had been eliminated from the most populated parts of China.

Right after the visits of Marco Polo, John of Monte Corvino, an Italian Franciscan, was sent to China in 1291. He was welcomed by Yan Cheng Tsun (1295 to 1308), the Mongol emperor. John and his associates led many to Christ, built quite a few churches in various parts of the country, and translated some of the Scriptures into Mongolian. (Pope Clement V even appointed John as archbishop in 1307.) Their work, however, was among the Mongol leaders; they did not teach the Han tribe, who were the majority of the population. When the Mongols and other foreigners were expelled from China in 1368 by the victory of Chu Yan Chang, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Christianity disappeared again at the same time.

Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary who came to China in 1582, was very successful with his mission. He discovered that dressing like a Buddhist or Taoist was not looked upon favorably by the common people, who—as the Chinese still do—respected educated people. Ricci knew that the future of his mission depended on the favor of the court, so he explored every possible way to get northward to the capital city. Yet, he did not forget to communicate the Gospel message to the common people and did not neglect to train the Chinese as leaders and as priests of the church.

Unlike the Roman Catholic leaders then in Macao, who taught Latin to the Chinese so they could worship with the Westerners, Ricci learned to speak Chinese and dressed

like a Chinese in order to approach the people. Further, he allowed Chinese believers to venerate their ancestors and to present offerings to Confucius. He considered this kind of veneration as a part of the Chinese cultural tradition and suggested that such rites were not in conflict with Christian discipline. He asserted that after the Chinese came to know the truth of Christianity, the worshiplike veneration of both their ancestors and Confucius would cease. Hence, he used every opportunity to teach the people to know the Word. Ricci not only understood the Chinese but he also knew the value of education.

The first Protestant to come to China was Robert Morrison, who arrived in 1807. He translated the Bible into Chinese and edited the first Chinese-English dictionary. He emphasized the press, Chinese periodicals, and schools in his mission work. The first Christian school in China, however, was started by the first American missionary, Elijah C. Bridgeman, who came to work with Morrison in 1830. The first Anglo-Chinese school was established in 1818 at Malacca by Morrison and his associate, William Milne. The Hong Kong Church of Christ in China follows the educational pattern established by Morrison and Milne very closely; its work in Hong Kong has prospered through this teaching ministry.

The first Lutheran missionary who came to China was K. F. A. Gutzlaff, a German who was sent by the Dutch. After coming to China in 1829, he distributed many Gospel tracts and individual books of the Bible in Chinese. Although he had been cheated by some of the Chinese distributors (they sold his books and tracts to the

printers, who sold them again to Gutzlaff), his calling of more missionaries to China resulted in the Rhenish Church, the Chun Tsin Church, and today's Evangelical Lutheran Church. According to Lau Weimin, in his lecture "The Joint Effort of Publishing Works of the Early Lutherans in China as a Basis for Our Future in Mission," these churches were very active in providing literature from the earliest stages. The history of these churches also shows that they did not lag behind other denominations in their educational ministry.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which started work in China in 1913, followed the same plan. It operated a publishing house and a seminary in Hankow as well as several primary and middle schools in various other places.

II. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF EDUCATION AND PARTICULARLY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

If a patient really wants the doctor to cure him, he must tell the doctor all the symptoms of his illness. The final goal of our Consultation on Education is to help us do a more effective job of Christian education, and therefore we must in all honesty analyze ourselves as we are. Some of our problems arise from Chinese traditions, some from habitual mistakes of the church, and some from prevailing theory or practice of the modern world. This writer has no intention of placing blame on anyone, but merely wishes to point out the differences between some of the existing traditional ideas of education and Christian education.

A. The Chinese custom of following a good teacher or seeking to enter a good

school makes Christians — even pastors and evangelists — think of schools to the neglect of parish education and family education whenever Christian education is mentioned. In Hong Kong, because there is no compulsory education, some schools can make a profit. Hence even many Christians want to take this advantage of having schools support the church, rather than allowing the church to support education.

B. As Lo Hsiang Lin pointed out in his book *Chinese National History*, already in very early times the Chinese instituted propriety and music as substitutes for religious ceremonies. In his books *The History of Chinese Thought* and *Chinese Thoughts in Common Dress* Chen Mo also mentions again and again that the Chinese are basically humanists; they do not have a deep sense of religion. Although Chinese humanists assert that a man should have religious beliefs, they consider religion to be like cigarettes and tea after the meal, rather than the meat of the meal itself. When the church requires a school to have more Bible lessons in class, this move receives criticism from both students and parents; furthermore, even Christian teachers and the administrators of Christian schools are often unhappy about adding Bible lessons.

The same holds true in parish education. There are very few Chinese Christians who, after confirmation, willingly delve deeper into the Bible or Christian doctrine. Even some of the Chinese church leaders often not only neglect the Word themselves but also fail to provide the opportunity for their members to deepen their understanding of the Bible.

C. Since the Chinese are basically humanists, they emphasize primarily *moral*

education. The virtues which have come down through several thousand years are echoed in the pulpits and in the classrooms of Chinese Christian schools. Chinese Christianity often becomes a moral religion rather than a religion of the Gospel because much of the moral religion which is traditional in Chinese culture is similar to the moral and ethical life which Scripture urges upon the Christian. However, this traditional religiosity does not lead people to live in the Gospel. Therefore, the Chinese *Christian* educator must learn to motivate his students with the Gospel. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit leads a person to believe in Jesus as Savior and through the Word and sacraments to obtain the forgiveness of sins. Then he comes to God with fear and love and serves Him and others, offering all the talents he has received from God for the glory of God and the benefit of man. In other words, Christ lives in a person who accepts the Gospel, and that person lives for Christ. His love for God and man is an outgrowth of faith in Christ, not something that is forced or is merely a means to obtain approval.

D. Moral education often takes place when older persons teach younger ones — in a way, “pouring ideas into their heads.” One becomes aware of the message, however, by means of witnessing, communication, and discussion. Since we are so accustomed to moral education, our main method of teaching is often the input method.

Unfortunately, the input method is nearly always the lecture method, a teacher lecturing to students. But because children may learn more effectively from their peers, we should use group discussions, group projects, reports, and other means

by which they can learn from each other. Furthermore, the whole area of a "problem-centered approach" to learning, or "experience-centered learning," is neglected when it is assumed that the only effective way to teach is to have the teacher talk and the student listen. This becomes crucial again in Christian education, for we believe that the Gospel message comes by witnessing, communication, and discussion. For the input method it does not matter how many students are in the classroom. This is why most of the classes in Southeast Asia consist of 45 to 48 students and sometimes even more. With so many students in a class, it is almost impossible to have child-centered or problem-centered or experience-centered education. Materials prepared for Sunday school, Bible classes, and so forth probably should be geared for no more than 25 students in a class.

Another traditional method of learning is memorization. Chinese writings, especially poetry, are usually more appealing when read aloud; therefore, verbatim memorizing of the text (both phrases and sentences) is often equated with learning the content, or all the facts, of the text. This is the method of learning emphasized in this part of the world. Stimulation of original thought and ways of logical thinking are neglected.

This is even true among the Chinese seminary students. For example, Victor Hafner gave two different tests on identical subject matter at Concordia Seminary, Chia Yi, Taiwan. The test which could be answered by quoting almost verbatim from the textbook was passed with good marks, but the test which required an understanding of the principles in relation to practical problems was failed by most of the class.

E. Closely related to the input method and verbatim memorizing of texts is the idea that education consists of "knowing" a set body of knowledge. Fung Yu Lan's book *History of Chinese Philosophy* points out that Emperor Han Wu (140—87 B.C.), in order to preserve political unity, accepted Tung Chung Shu's suggestion to make Confucianism the orthodox belief of the Han dynasty at the expense of the other schools of thought (136 B.C.). Tung Chung Shu was also prominent in creating an institutional basis for this Confucian orthodoxy, the famed Chinese examination system, which began to take shape during his time. Under this system entry into the ranks of the government officials who ruled the country did not depend on noble birth or wealth but rather on success in a series of periodic examinations conducted by the government simultaneously throughout the country and open to all members of society with few exceptions. Furthermore, Tung Chung Shu insisted on the Confucian *Classics* as the ideological basis for these examinations. Since then the *Five Classics* have become the main books for Chinese scholars. In the time of the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960—1279), the Neo-Confucianists added four more books: *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *Confucian Analects*, and the *Works of Mencius*. While the *Four Books* and *Five Classics* are studied all over the country by young and old alike, the Chinese Christian considers the Bible as the sole textbook for all learning in Christian education. When the Lutheran Southeast Asia Christian Education Curricula Committee began discussions about developing some graded Christian education materials based on age levels and life involvements, it was not only new

to many people but some actually asked: "Is not the Bible good enough for everybody?"

Knowing a set body of knowledge intellectually also stands in the way of developing attitudes, understandings, and values. For instance, when a student is learning history only to pass an examination, the teacher will have a very difficult time getting him to think about the real meaning of the historical facts being taught, the implication of these facts for the world situation today, or the matter of developing some kind of attitude toward a historical event or of judging its value. These objectives are nearly impossible, even if the teacher stresses them. Worse yet, teachers too are often concerned mostly with facts. Christian education must go beyond the head. Saving faith is in the heart, and the new obedience, as a fruit of belief, in the hands.

F. The Chinese have a deep concern for the family and clan. According to the concept, "the greatest sin against filial piety is not to have descendants," the marriage of a person is for the family and not for himself only. Because of the desire to "glorify the ancestors," all learning as well as the career of an individual are dedicated to the clan. In order that a person can be "for the clan," he must sacrifice himself. This dedication to the clan is often transferred to the church among Chinese Christians; hence the educational ministry in Chinese-speaking churches often *neglects* the individual. However, Christian education should emphasize the individual. In the last part of John Chu's article, "The Meaning of Christian Education," he stresses this point and says that Christian education, although it is for all people, is

not like a factory which manufactures identical products. Christian education emphasizes *individual differences*. When John the Baptist preached, he gave different individuals different guides (Luke 3:10-14). In His ministry Jesus took time to deal separately with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the rich young ruler, and Zaccheus. In Romans 12 Paul admonishes each one to use properly the unique gifts God has given him. These are just a few examples of emphasis on the individual in Christian education.

G. There is no doubt that the old system of government-administered literary degree examinations still has a deep influence on the educational system in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Similarly, although many schools in this area stress moral, intellectual, physical, social, and esthetic education, the difficult entrance examinations of secondary schools and colleges in Taiwan and the government school-leaving examinations in Hong Kong force students—and even teachers—to be concerned only about the intellectual aspects of education. The rest is something like an appendix. Education in the mainland of China is worse. It is nothing but a means of making man a political instrument or a machine that will help make the country rich.

Christian education is the education of the total man. Christian education must deal with the needs of man's body and soul in addition to his mind, for God made man *in this way*. More administrators and teachers in Chinese-speaking Christian churches should comprehend what Harold Schmidt said in his article, "The Philosophy of Christian Education," namely, that spiritual needs should not be

separated from the other needs of man. The education of the total man deals not only with knowledge, emotion, and will (or with the head, the heart, and the hands), but it enables a man to grow in the fullness of Christ Jesus. It also requires those who teach to know the essence of Christian education.

Ling Tze-Lau points out in his article, "The Difference Between Christian Education and General Education," that Christian education is essentially God-centered, man-centered, and material-centered. He says that "God-centered" means the use of all the Word of God to nurture the whole man; "man-centered" refers to the cultivation of the whole man through the "doctrine of the mean" and an emphasis on benevolence; "material-centered" means building up the learner's scientific knowledge and skill, developing his professional abilities, and improving man's life.

H. The Confucian saying, "Seek high office after you have excellent learning," together with the system of examinations in education, prompts many Chinese to labor under wrong motivations for learning. Undoubtedly even today there are many Chinese who seek learning for its own sake or who learn simply in order to pass examinations. For others, learning is a means of becoming great or powerful. What then should be the real purpose of receiving an education? It is this: to obtain greater ability, deeper insight, and newer methods to serve God and man. The Chinese-speaking churches can have a new life if their wrong concepts from the past can be changed. Schmidt, in the article cited above, points out that the result of Christian education is "change."

It changes the learner's view of life and view of the world; it changes his way of dealing with others, his work, and his service; it changes also his sense of values.

III. PROBLEMS BETWEEN MISSION BOARDS, MISSIONARIES, AND THE LOCAL CHURCHES

It is self-evident that mission boards and missionaries have done some extremely good things in Christian education among the Chinese-speaking churches. Good things, however, are not problems; hence they are not dealt with here. The focus here is on *problems*.

Herbert Schaefer, secretary of the Commission on Education of the Lutheran World Federation, pointed out in his lecture on "Christian Education as Nurture in the Ministry of the Church" that 20 out of every 25 members joining non-Roman-Catholic churches in Japan at any one time drop out within 5 years. Similar situations prevail in other parts of Asia. Why does the church lose such a high percentage of its members? According to Schaefer's survey, the answer is that the church has neglected its task of nurturing.

Yoshikazu Miura, chairman of the Education Committee of the Japan Lutheran Church, in his lecture "Theological Foundations for Christian Education" mentions that the three kinds of work in Jesus' ministry — teaching, preaching, and healing (Matt. 4:23) — should also be the works of the church today. Schaefer too in his lecture emphasizes that the function of the church is preaching, nurturing, and service.

Teaching, or nurturing, is one of the three great tasks of the church. Why, then, has the church neglected this and consequently lost so many members? One of

the reasons is a lack of awareness on the part of mission boards and some missionaries. The boards send missionaries to "preach the Gospel"; as a result, the main concern of the missionaries when they get to the field is "to save souls." What is the result then? The Gospel is preached and some converts are baptized, so that missionaries can send good reports to their boards, and the boards in turn can send statistics to their supporting churches. It seems that everybody has done his job, but the task is not really finished. The missionaries' point of view may be that the work of nurturing is the responsibility of the local churches. It may also be that the missionaries *have* taught the national pastors and teachers to emphasize this. However, the actions of the missionaries speak louder than their words, and the national workers usually follow the practice rather than the teachings of the missionaries.

Another educational problem involving missionaries is their lack of understanding of the culture and customs and their consequent lack of respect for the people. Some missionaries have the habit of making unconstructive criticisms, which cancel their attempts at positive teaching. For example, after a young man had taken a new missionary sight-seeing, each was disgusted with the other's way of blowing his nose. One thought it was not sanitary to blow and spit on the ground; the other thought it was not sanitary to put a filthy handkerchief into one's pocket. We have all been told which way is better today. However, if the missionary had not educated this youngster in a positive way and had only criticized him, what kind of reaction would he have gotten?

Some missionaries might occasionally forget Jesus' teaching that we should "give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's." Often missionaries offend the local people by showing their differing views in politics. In his letter of the First Sunday in Advent 1968, Won Yong Ji, the Asia secretary of the Board of World Missions, LWF, says that during the Long Range Planning Conference of the nine Lutheran Churches in India, held in September 1968, Christianity "in Indian spirit" was emphasized. Some people expressed their feelings, saying, "I am a Christian, but also an Indian." Furthermore, some said, "Our faith must be rooted in India." These statements illustrate attitudes among the Chinese as well.

Another problem arises when missionaries have to bear some of the administrative work for education in a new mission field. After some national leaders are trained, however, it is debatable if missionaries should do the administration or if they should serve only as resource persons.

IV. NEEDS OF CHINESE-LANGUAGE CHURCHES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

There are many Chinese-speaking churches in this broad area of Southeast Asia. Because of varying literary levels and differences in socioeconomic situations and educational systems in each place, the needs of Christian education also differ in each area both in kind and in degree. In general, good teachers and suitable materials are needed everywhere.

According to the 1968 survey of Paul Hsu, the Chinese secretary of the Bible Societies in Hong Kong, the prohibition of

preaching to natives in Malaysia and Singapore has created an urgent need for good Bible correspondence courses. In Hong Kong, however, since there are so many Christian day schools in the churches, graded materials for different school levels are necessary. Taiwan has another problem: because the government does not allow the teaching of religion in classrooms, weekday Bible school and vacation Bible school materials are of prime importance. According to the investigation of Arthur Wu, our committee secretary, no matter where the Chinese-speaking churches are located, they need good Bib-

lical and confessional confirmation materials.

The seven churches in Southeast Asia have entrusted our committee with the task of designing curricula which will suit all the churches in this area. In the process of designing such programs, proper consideration must be given—among other things—to the backgrounds of teachers and students, as well as to socioeconomic situations, the language, and the illustrations.

No doubt many unforeseeable problems will arise, but the task is challenging.

Hong Kong