

RECENT ARTICLES
ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS
IN CHINESE MAGAZINES

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Besides the two magazines especially devoted to the study of religion, Research on World Religions and Materials on World Religions (世界宗教研究, 世界宗教資料), of which two issues of each have appeared in 1980, articles which may be of interest to Christians have also appeared this year in other intellectual journals.

In the September, 1980 (#9) issue of Study (讀書) an article by Yang De You (楊德友) entitled, "Return to the Original Meaning of the Bible," (還聖經的本來面目), pp. 77-85, introduces this book to a Chinese audience. After giving the Hebrew background, the author explains the structure of the Bible: division into Old and New Testaments, descriptions of various kinds of books, etc. He then gives examples of Biblical influence in European art and literature. In conclusion, the author says that while our attitude is not that of a Christian believer, still we should not consider the Bible as a product of superstition. He urges the Chinese student to

have an attitude of respect for the Bible, as one would have for any cultural legacy. Students are urged to study the Bible historically and scientifically, in order to understand the cultures of Europe and America, which the Bible has influenced.

Another article by Chen Shen Ru and Zhu Jen Yi (陳申如, 朱正誼), entitled "A Preliminary Discussion of the Historical Role of the Jesuits of the Late Ming and Early Ching Dynasties," (試論明末清初耶穌會士的歷史作用) which appeared in Research in Chinese History, #2, 1980, pp. 135-44, (中國史研究) tells of the contributions of the Jesuits to East-West cultural exchange. Founded at the time of the Catholic Counter-Reformation (1540), the authors tell us, the Jesuits came to Macao with the Portuguese colonists in the 1550's. The authors then list five methods the Jesuits used to spread the Catholic religion: 1. Learn the Chinese language and study Confucianism, 2. Enter intellectual circles, meet famous people, and gradually gain their confidence by adopting Christianity to Chinese customs, 3. Introduce Western learning and scientific instruments, 4. Translate religious and scientific books, and 5. Obtain support of the emperor to legalize Jesuit activity in China.

In spite of accusing the Jesuits of being the vanguard of Portuguese colonialism, the authors do credit them with making important contributions to Chinese scientific knowledge, especially in the fields of cannon making, astronomy, calendar and map making, mathematics and physics. At the same time, the Jesuits introduced China's ancient knowledge to Europe. The Jesuits, the authors say, cannot be put in the same category as the missionaries who accompanied the Capitalist powers which invaded China after the Opium War. One

of their converts was the famous Ming official and scientist, Xu Guang Qi. The contribution of western scientific learning to China by the Jesuits must be affirmed, the authors conclude.

The above-mentioned Xu Guang Qi has been treated in two recent articles. The first in Study (讀書), #6, June, 1980, pp. 76-82, entitled "Research into the Information Contained in Xu Guang Qi's 'Book on Agricultural Administration' (研究徐光啓"農政全書"的啓示) by Xi Wei Min (席爲民), describes Xu's contribution to scientific agriculture in China. It does not mention his connection with the Jesuits and his conversion to Catholicism. The second article in Renwu (人物), #3, 1980, pp. 133-6, entitled "The Famous Ming Dynasty Scientist Xu Guang Qi (明代著名科學家徐光啓)," by Chen Jiang (陳江) spells out Xu's role in the introduction of Western scientific learning to China. This article does mention his association with Matteo Ricci, with whom Xu studied astronomy, math, calendar making, geography and hydraulics.

A final article, entitled "Some Historical Questions Regarding the Jews in China," (關於中國境內猶太人的若干歷史問題), by Pan Guang Dan (潘光旦) in Chinese Social Science, (中國社會科學), #3, 1980, pp. 171-86 lists the places in China where Jewish people are recorded to have lived.

The appearance of such articles shows a resurgence of interest in religious topics among intellectuals in China.