

AN EASTER VISIT TO HUADONG, or Carroll Study Tour n° 3



by Peter Barry

On Easter Monday, April 4, 1983, my good friend Rev. Ewing "Bud" Carroll, the director of the China Liaison Office of the United Methodist Church and editor of the popular journal, China Talk, and I set out from Hong Kong's Kaitak airport on what we came to call "Carroll China Study Tour No. 3."¹

Bud and I had decided to visit just three or four cities in the Huadong, or eastern, area of China. We singled out Nanjing, Shanghai and Fuzhou as possible destinations, and any other cities in between, should the occasion to visit them arise.

In Nanjing we met many friends, both old and new, including: Bishop K.H. Ting, Mr. Han Wenzao, Jinling seminary professors Chen Ziming, Lin Yixuan and Zhao Zhien, and last, but by no means least, our compatriots from the United States and Hong Kong, Philip, Janice and Elizabeth Wickeri. The Wickeris' wind up their two-year stint as English teachers at Nanjing University this July.

While in Nanjing, Bud and I visited several places of historical interest. On Ching Ming festival day (April 5), we went by bicycle to Zhong Shan Ling, the tomb of Dr. Sun Yatsen. This was quite an experience for me because I had not been on a bicycle for many years. As is well known, bicycle is the mode of travel of most of the citizens of China. I must say, the ride back from the tomb was much easier: It was all down hill!

We also visited the Jiangsu Province government offices, where are located (on the same site) three important places in modern Chinese history: the palace of the Taiping Heavenly King, Hong Xiuquan, the office of Dr. Sun Yatsen's temporary government (1912), and the seat of the Nationalist government of the Republic of China, 1928-1949. We saw the stone boat built for the Heavenly King in the pond on the grounds of his

palace. We also walked through the Sun government offices and Dr. Sun's living quarters. It called to mind a visit I had made earlier to Dr. Sun's birth place in Zhong Shan County in Guangdong.

We also visited places of religious interest in Nanjing, like Jinling Seminary, the Catholic Church, the Buddhist monastery at Qixia Mountain, and the Buddhist printing shop, known as the Jinling Kejing Chu.



Pressing the paper into the inked block

At the latter place, everything connected with printing is done by hand. In one room we observed workers carving characters backwards into wood blocks. In the next room, other workers brushed the blocks with ink, placed a thin piece of paper on top, and finally pressed the paper into the block with a roller, thus producing a printed page. In another room people were sewing the pages together to produce a complete book.

The print shop was started nearly 100 years ago by a Buddhist "Ju Shi" (a married lay believer who devotes his life to the service of Buddhism) by the name of

Yang Renshan (1837-1911). The present director of the print shop, the fourth in its history, is Mr. Li An. Mr. Li told us that the shop has the wood blocks for 1,000 Buddhist texts. Some of these were destroyed by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, however. Others were thrown around, mixing up their order. Now in addition to repairing the destroyed blocks, they have the job of sorting out the mixed up ones. Nevertheless, they have reprinted about 80 of the 1,000 texts in the last few years, Mr. Li said.

At Qixia Mountain monastery, located about 25 kilometers outside Nanjing, we had hoped to see the nearly 200 novice monks from all over China, who are undergoing a year's training in preparation for staffing

the many monasteries being opened throughout the country. Alas, the "little monks" ("xiao heshang"), as the local people call them, were off on an outing the day we were there. Here too, the destruction of the Cultural Revolution is apparent: the heads of most of the statues in the grotto surrounding the monastery were missing.

One day we stopped for a visit to Nanjing's Immaculate Conception Catholic Church on Shi Gu Road. Though the sign for the factory which occupied the church during the Cultural Revolution is still affixed to the front gate, the church building itself has been completely renovated and returned to the church's jurisdiction. We were led to the sitting room located on the side of the church. A tapestry of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" hangs from one wall. There we spent a pleasant hour chatting with Bishop Qian Huimin, a Mr. Zhu and a Mr. Liu. In answer to a question about the pastoral activities of the parish, Bishop Qian replied that, since the church has been opened for only a little over a year, they are concentrating on building up the numbers of parishioners again. For instance, there were 500 people in attendance at the Easter Masses; a distinct increase from the 70-80 who were coming last year. As for parish activities, they would like to start a choir, but for the time being they play church music on a tape recorder during services, the bishop said.

Mr. Zhu, who though a Catholic is on the staff of Jinling Seminary teaching Chinese classical literature, told us that Bishop Qian is still working hard to get all the church property back. Mr. Liu brought out four large picture albums, which contained photos of famous foreign Catholics who had visited Nanjing, like Cardinal Koenig of Vienna, Austria, Father Louis Wei of France and Sister Theresa Zhu from Canada. There were also pictures of Bishop Qian's consecration (with four other bishops in Beijing in July, 1981), his installation as bishop of Nanjing, and the joint meeting of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and Church Affairs Commission in Beijing in May-June, 1980 (attended by about 200 representatives).

Before leaving, Mr. Liu gave us postcards (altogether 8 pictures) depicting scenes of activities at the Nanjing Catholic Church. We already knew about these, because they were the only postcards with scenes of Nanjing that one could buy in the store at our hotel. We were also given a large poster showing the Stations of the Cross, with the Risen Lord in the center.

On Friday, April 8, Bud and I took the 12:30 P.M. train from Nanjing to Shanghai, arriving about 4:30. Hotel rooms were hard to come

by in Shanghai, but due to our persistence and a late cancellation, we were able to book a room in the Peace Hotel, right on the Bund.

In Shanghai we again met new and old friends, including Li Shou-bao, General Secretary of the YMCA, Mr. Huang, YMCA Ass't Gen. Secretary, who had recently been part of a delegation to Washington, D.C., Shen Derong, Secretary General of the 3-Self Movement of the Protestant Church, Jiang Wenhan, researcher at Shanghai's Academy of Social Sciences, and Shen Yifan, pastor of Shanghai's Community Church.

We had a pleasant hour's visit with Li Shoubao and Mr. Huang at the Xizang Road YMCA on Saturday afternoon, April 9. The whole building has now been returned to the Y, Mr. Li told us, and they now plan to renovate the rooms in preparation for receiving guests. Thus they hope to be of service to the tourist trade in Shanghai by helping to alleviate the shortage of hotel rooms. After our experience in trying to locate a room, we encouraged Mr. Li and Mr. Huang in their endeavor.

The YMCA hopes to get the Beijing and Tianjin properties back in the near future, but they have the problem of providing personnel to staff them. The Wuhan Y, on the other hand, is developing rapidly under the direction of some young college graduates. They want to put the "C" back into YMCA, Mr. Li said, and therefore they are emphasizing Bible study at the Shanghai Y. The YMCA is fast approaching the centenary of its existence in China, having started there in 1885, Mr. Li told us.

Bud and I felt especially holy at the end of the day, Sunday, April 10. That day we attended services in three different churches. We started early in the morning with Mass and Benediction at the Catholic cathedral at Xujiahui. At Benediction, the choir sang the "Regina Coeli" in Latin polyphony. It brought back memories of my seminary days 20 years earlier, when we sang the same hymn. I could not help but join the whole congregation in singing the chorus: "Regina Coeli, Regina Coeli, laetare, laetare, alleluia!"

After Mass we met Father Shen Baozhi at the back of the church. We did not have much time to visit with him because we had arranged with Shen Derong to be picked up at the Xujiahui church gate, and taken to a country church in the outskirts of Shanghai. We had noticed that the church towers have been restored. Yes, said Father Shen, and they had good cooperation from the government and the people in the neighborhood the day they put the towers back on the church. The city government had turned off the electricity in the Xujiahui district for half a day, and cut the electrical wires, to permit a huge crane to maneuver near the

church and restore the towers. The nearby factories had to send their workers home a half a day early. Father Shen also told us that 13 Catholic churches are now open in the Shanghai diocese.

At promptly 8:30 A.M. Shen Derong pulled up with car and driver at the church gate to take us to visit a former Methodist church in the countryside, called "Yesu Tang" (Jesus Church). It is located in Nan Hui County about 35 kilometers southeast of Shanghai. Eighty-four year old pastor Gu Baozhang shared with us some of the history and present condition of the parish. The parish was begun by Methodist missionaries in 1905, and there had been ten pastors at the church before Pastor Gu arrived in 1948.

As with most churches throughout the country during the Cultural Revolution, Yesu Tang was also occupied by a factory. It re-opened as a church in November, 1981. There have been two group baptisms since the re-opening, Pastor Gu told us, and most of the baptised were over 50 years of age. Also, women outnumbered men by a few. There were 107 candidates in the first group, while 121 were baptised in the second group. There are altogether 2,200 baptised faithful in Pastor Gu's congregation, and at least 1,700 attend Sunday worship, either at the main church or at one of the meeting points.

The worship service at Yesu Tang is held at 1 P.M. on Sundays, after all the peasants have finished their shopping in the market. The Sunday we were there it was a memorial service for the deceased members of the parish. Pictures of the deceased members were placed on tables in front, and their names, beautifully written, were prominently displayed for all to see. Despite his advanced years, Pastor Gu delivered a powerful sermon on the new life we Christians have in Christ, and therefore we need have no fear of death. At the end of the service, Pastor Gu invited Bud up to the stage to impart the final blessing. Bud was pleased, and at the same time touched by this brotherly gesture.

Pastor Gu told us that the Catholic Church in Nan Hui had re-opened the previous Sunday (Easter), and that he had attended the opening ceremony. We did not have time to visit the Catholic Church ourselves, but Pastor Gu told me a few times how pleased he was that a Catholic priest had visited his church.

That evening, back in Shanghai, we attended a worship service at the Community Church, where Shen Yifan is pastor. Pastor Shen preached a sermon on the meaning of the Eucharist, taking as his text the passage about the disciples on the road to Emmaus from Luke's Gospel.

On Tuesday, April 12, since we had nothing special planned, Bud and I decided to take the train for an hour's ride back up the railroad line towards Nanjing, to the picturesque city of Suzhou. After a delicious fish dinner at a Suzhou restaurant, we went in search of the Protestant Church. It is called "Shitu Tang," or "Disciples Church," and we were warmly welcomed by Pastor Yao Tianhui, Pastor Bao Guping, Catechist Huang Bozhen and a lady church worker, Peng Yiyun. They recalled with pleasure the visit of Father Anthony Zheng and other Hong Kong Catholics connected with Yi - China Message magazine in the summer of 1982. They were happy that news about their church appeared in a subsequent issue of Yi (No. 21).

Pastor Yao gave us directions to the Catholic Church in Suzhou: take bus #9 to the end of the line, and from there walk straight ahead into the countryside for about half an hour. We followed Pastor Yao's instructions, and pretty soon we could see St. Peter's Church looming above the fields and houses of a small farming village. On the way, we walked past a new housing development of 4 - 5 storey apartment buildings, with street lights and newly paved roads leading up to them. It was proof to us that the Chinese government is really serious about solving the housing shortage problem, which affects many parts of the country. At St. Peter's Church we met the pastor, Father Qian Junyuan. He is 59 years old and was ordained in 1955. St. Peter's was occupied by a factory during the Cultural Revolution, and was given back to the church in 1980. However, it was not until early 1982 that renovations were completed and the building re-opened. About 400 Catholics attend the one Mass on Sundays.

But was Father Qian surprised when approximately 6,000 people turned up for Easter Mass! The people came from all over the countryside, and included many fishermen, Father Qian said. A priest came from Shanghai to help Father Qian, but it still took the two priests over an hour to distribute Holy Communion. Over 2,000 Catholics had gone to confession. Father Qian told us that his back was sore after giving absolution and distributing communion to so many people.

In the parish there are two nuns, aged 78 and 77, who belong to a diocesan order. Just while we were there, the 78 year old Sister was conducting a catechism class for a group of teenage boys and girls. All were listening attentively to Sister's explanations. When we interrupted the quiet atmosphere of the class to take a picture, the faces of the young people broke into nervous smiles. Father Qian told us that they were the children of Catholics, but that previously they did not have much training in the faith.

*Half of the catechism
class at St. Peter's
Catholic Church, Suzhou
(the girls are on the
other side of the aisle)*



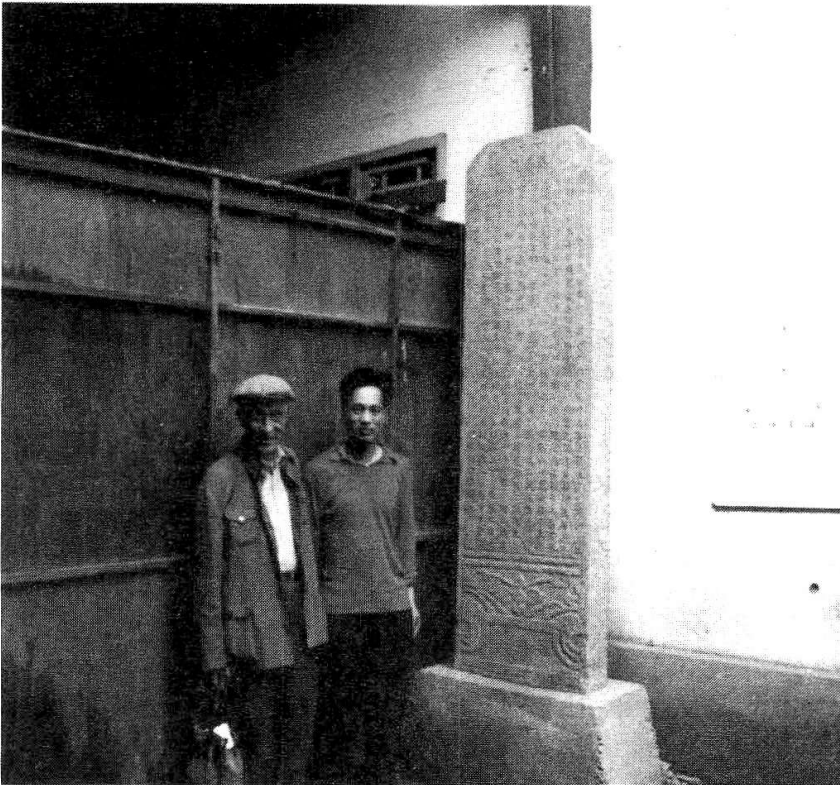
After some more pictures in front of the church, with Father Qian and the young catechist surnamed Chen, we made a rather hasty departure. We had tickets on the 5:30 train back to Shanghai, and we knew that we had the long walk back to Suzhou and the bus to the train station ahead of us.

The next stop on our tour was Fuzhou, where we spent three days, April 14-16. In Fuzhou, Bud and I visited both the Catholic Church and the Flower Lane Protestant Church, near Dong Jie Kou. At the Catholic Church we met the pastor, Father Joseph Ho, and Mr. Chen, catechist. We also saw about ten seminary candidates, who live and study there in the large room above the church. A section of this room is closed off with a curtain, and contains the seminarians' beds and desks. Father Ho told us that they are studying hard at this time to prepare themselves to take the entrance examination for the Sheshan seminary, near Shanghai, where they hope to become members of the second class of students.

At the Flower Lane Church we had a pleasant visit with Bishop Moses Xue and Mr. Yang, a former secretary with the Anglican Church. Bishop Xue said that it is very apparent ("hen ming xian") that the Chinese Church must follow the Three-Self road. Chinese Christians are now one with their fellow citizens. In the past, this was very often not

the case. Christians outside of China must understand this situation about the Chinese church, Bishop Xue said.

Another feature of our trip to Fuzhou was viewing the stone stele which commemorates the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries to Fuzhou. The stele, carved and erected in 1910, now stands in the Fujian Provincial Art Museum, located on Fuzhou's Mt. Yu. It had special meaning for Bud because those first missionaries were Methodists. Did we order a rubbing of the stele? No need to ask. We ordered five - for ourselves, as well as for other friends.



*Professor David K. Lin,
Geography Department,
Fujian Teachers College,
and museum worker stand-
ing next to stone stele*

On Saturday, April 16, we made a quick change of planes at Guangzhou's White Cloud airport, having flown down from Fuzhou earlier in the afternoon. We decided not to stay over in Guangzhou because the Trade Fair had just started. We did not want to face the difficulty again of trying to find a hotel room.

Thus, "Carroll China Study Tour #3" came to an abrupt end about 5:30 P.M. on April 16, when we landed back at Kaitak from which we had set out twelve days previously. Bud and I both agreed that, in addition to renewing acquaintances with old friends, we had learned a lot. We were also impressed with the ever increasing activity taking place in the

churches, both Protestant and Catholic, in the areas we visited.

FOOTNOTE:

1. The real Carroll Study Tour, #3, originally scheduled for October, 1982, was cancelled due to lack of participants. I had already participated in Carroll China Study Tours, Nos. 1 and 2, but Bud and I had frequently talked about the two of us going on a trip to China together. Our hopes were realized just after Easter this year, and we jokingly called the trip "Carroll China Study Tour #3," to replace the cancelled one of 1982. By the way, Bud is planning "Study Tour #4" for September-October, 1983, and is looking for participants. Call his Hong Kong office (3-7135271) for details.

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