

From the Editor

If history is your cup of tea, you will find a variety of blends in this issue of Tripod. In fact, all our articles this month are in one way or another concerned with China's past. Francis Bacon has said: "Histories make men wise." But you do not need to bring such a noble purpose to the task, just a curiosity about how the things that were came to be the things that are will do. We trust you will find something in the following pages to draw your attention, stimulate your appetite for further study, and even, maybe a few things to surprise you.

Mr. Chan Suijeung might be categorized among the surprises. He is an authority in an area that has few authorities, namely, an expert on the Jewish Community of Kaifeng. In this first of two articles (the second will appear in our next issue), Mr. Chan shares some of the findings of a life-time of private research into the Chinese branch of the Children of Abraham.

The development of democratic ideas in China is the focus of the first of two Tripod Interviews appearing in this issue. Dr. Michael Luk of Hong Kong University's Department of History takes us on an intellectual journey from the closing decades of the Qing, through the turbulent years of the Republic, and right up to our present day. Dr. Luk traces the conflict of ideas, from evolution to revolution, that offers clues to a better understanding of China's present socialistic system.

Our third article introduces some basic problems that China poses for Contextual Theology. Paul Welte is a theologian and member of the Theology Faculty of Fujen University, Taiwan. Paul's purpose is to stimulate a dialogue between Chinese and Western theologians in an analysis of Christian faith and Chinese traditions.

This year the Dominican Order is celebrating 350 years of history in China, and Peter Barry, our Research Associate, pays tribute with a summary of the history of the Church in Fujian Province. Not only was Fujian the centre of Dominican evangelical activity for over three centuries, but the history of the Church there can serve as a microcosm for the history of the Church in China as well.

Tripod's second Interview this month is with an old friend,

Sister Joanna Chan, MM. Doctor Chan returned to her home-town this summer at the request of the Hong Kong Urban Council to present her play, The Empress Dowager. Here she speaks of the relationship between her religious and artistic life, and reveals the underlying theme of her historical drama, which turns out to be quite contemporary.

With the Jesuits appearing in Kaifeng and the Dominicans in Fujian, our present issue would not be complete without a word from that third great religious Order, the Franciscans. Ludovicus Liu, O.F.M., in a brief introduction to the work of the Franciscans during the Yuan Dynasty, not only gives us some interesting historical material but supplements his article with a valuable bibliography of Chinese source books relating to that period. Also, you will find here something on the Church in Quanzhou, an area of China that is becoming a favorite tourist site.

And so we bring another issue of Tripod to a close, with the sincere hope that it brings you at least one step further along Francis Bacon's road to wisdom.

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