

In traditional Chinese society, especially as constituted in the rural villages, one comes across two phenomena which give evidence of our concern for our ancestors. There is the ancestral hall, a place where the sacred ancestor tablets were kept and honoured, and just about every family is still in possession of their family tree, a record that traces their lineage back over hundreds of years -- the more prominent the family, the further back they are able to go. I can remember as a boy being brought to live for a time in one such village. It was during the Japanese invasion. Our family had fled our native home in Guichixian ( 貴池縣 ) to escape from the bombardment of Japanese planes, and had sought refuge with relatives in a small village called Pan Hong ( 潘洪 ). The village had gotten its name from the peasant families who lived there, for those who were not named Pan were of the family of Hong. All of the above illustrates the closely knit structure of Chinese kinship society and how families strived to keep possession of the legacy handed down to them from their ancestors.

Not all villages managed to retain the simple structures of the ancient tradition as did Pan Hong. Larger villages were made up of people with many different surnames representing a variety of different clans, and, of course, the cities were another matter entirely.

Every family, however, did try its best to hold onto their ancestral legacy and worked to achieve something that might bring honour to their ancestors' memory. With the passage of time, the focus of people's concerns and their self-awareness has been gradually enlarged. For example, the Chinese expression tong xiang literally means "people from the same vil-  
lage". But today the term is used to describe people who come from the same city, or county, or dis-  
trict, or even province. In fact,

among overseas Chinese who belong to a tong xiang association, it is the province that is the standard unit for membership. This is very reasonable. People from the same province share a common way of speaking and similarities in character, temperament and native ability. The many beautiful poems and songs of Chinese literature written about yearning for one's native land and returning home again have found resonance in the Chinese soul for generations. I quote here one of the short poems of Li Bai (李白) which is not only a favorite among Chinese but popular among many foreigners as well.

*The moon shines brightly above my bed,  
It seems to me like frost upon the ground,  
Lifting my head I see the shining moon,  
Lowering my head, I think thoughts of my native land.*

It has only been in the past century or two that the idea of nation has come into prominence. This is true not only in China but in other countries as well. We can take as our point of departure the founding of the Republic of China in 1911 by Dr. Sun Yatsen. Up to that time, imperial rule was the order of the day, and the three elements that constitute a nation -- its people, territory and sovereignty -- were all



in the hands of the imperial court. There was only the "family" ( 家 ), people bound together by filial ties; there was no concept of "nation" ( 國 ). In ancient China during the Yao ( 堯 ) and Sun ( 舜 ) periods, the country was the common possession of all. It was only after the Yu ( 禹 ) period that family rule came into being and the country became the property of the Imperial family. It was Dr. Sun who revived the earlier tradition, returning the country to the public domain. Thus, to speak of Sun Yatsen as the transmitter and restorer of China's orthodoxy is completely correct.

In China's Middle Ages, a period running from the 4th to the 15th century, the serf served the lord in exchange for having his family needs satisfied. This was the so-called feudalistic society. After the Middle Ages, when the concept of nation-state developed, it was first conceived of as the perfect society (societas perfecta), and only later as an organic political body. However, this notion of "organic body" is not to be equated with that which was introduced by Kant in his philosophy of natural science where function results from an interaction of component parts; rather, it is derived from a much older model, that of the human body where the head is the principle organ and all other parts are subordinate to it. This concept as applied to a nation-state sees government, or the emperor, as the head and the people as obedient subjects responsible for carrying out its directives.<sup>1</sup>

In contemporary Western society, we are approaching a new stage where "state" and "society" often find themselves in opposite camps. And while sovereignty and the power of final decision rest with the state, individuals and the society they create by their communal life also have their own independent position (societas civilis extra imperium). Freedom, human rights, rule-by-law, and a constitution to protect these rights, are all concrete expressions of this. The nation-state cannot isolate itself from society and become independent; rather, it depends on society's achievements and contributions in order to survive. Therefore, the state must always allow society to become involved in its actions, and the state alone should not be allowed to influence society, nor be allowed, by itself, to grant and protect society's rights. On the contrary, society ought to exert its influence on the state and its bureaucracy in a variety of ways. It should not be said that it is enough for society to have representatives present in the state and in the state bureaucracy. This is merely an excuse given by totalitarian political organisms.<sup>2</sup>

Changes in the concepts and policies of state and society have an

influence over our thoughts and attitudes without our being fully aware of it. For this reason, we have to think through carefully, and make clear distinctions about such concepts as legacy, nativeland, nation, China, foreign countries, and the kingdom of heaven, if we hope to seek to understand more accurately the idea of patriotism. Let us begin, then, with the Bible.

### REMEMBRANCE OF ANCESTORS, LONGING FOR THE HOMELAND, LOVE OF COUNTRY AND THE BIBLE

Genealogical listings of ancestors appear throughout the Bible. They represent the work of different authors writing at different historical periods, the earliest being those recorded in the Book of Genesis. Chapter four of that book contains the Yahwist version of the descendents of Cain, which is used to describe the beginnings of human civilization. In chapter five, we find the Priestly version of mankind's genesis from our first parents to Noah and the deluge. The Yahwist and Priestly documents combine in chapter ten to offer the list of nations descended from the children of Noah. Finally, in chapter 11, 10-26, we are given the Semitic genealogical tree of Abraham, the progenitor of the Chosen People of the Old Testament. The tradition of providing prominent Old Testament figures, such as kings (Saul and David), major prophets, and high priests with ancestral family trees (the more prominent the individual the longer the list), continued down into New Testament times. Jesus Christ, who established the New Covenant, is given not one but two genealogies. The Gospel of Matthew traces his lineage to Abraham to establish his Semite credentials, while Luke's listing goes all the way back to Adam, for it is Luke's purpose to show Jesus' solidarity with the whole human race. One can see from all of the above that when it comes to holding in respect the memory of ancestors, the Biblical and Chinese traditions are very close.<sup>3</sup>

The 'homeland' -- the land of one's ancestors -- occupied an extremely important place in the faith-life and the expectations of Old Testament peoples.<sup>4</sup> When enemies invaded the homeland, laid waste the countryside and dispersed the people, their poets expressed their desolation in sad and mournful songs. What characterizes the five chapters of the Book of Lamentations over and above the poet's descriptions of a country ravaged and a nation in distress, is the message of future hope it gives to a repentant people. For those who suffered exile in a foreign land, the sense of longing for their homeland knew no bounds.

*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept*

*When we remembered Zion.  
There on the willow trees we hung up our harps,  
For there those who carried us off  
Demanded music and singing,  
And our captors called on us to be merry:  
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."  
How could we sing the Lord's song  
In a foreign land?  
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
Let my right hand wither away;  
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
If I do not remember you .....*

*Psalm 137*

In the New Testament, we find our example of patriotism in its founder Jesus, himself. While he rose to his responsibility as saviour of the whole world, still, in his own lifetime he never left Palestine, an area not larger than a few hundred square miles. He said of himself: "I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and to them alone." (Matthew 15, 24) Mark records this same incident of the gentile woman's appeal to Jesus to cast out a devil from her daughter with a similar response: "Let the children be satisfied first. It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." (Mark 7, 27) Before his death and resurrection, Jesus followed a definite procedure in dispatching his disciples: "Do not take the road to the gentile lands, and do not enter any Samaritan town; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, proclaim the message: the kingdom of heaven is upon you." (Matthew 10, 5-7) However, after his resurrection and prior to his ascension, Jesus did command his disciples to "Go forth and make all nations my disciples; baptize men everywhere in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28, 19-20)

It can be said truly that Jesus offered his life for his country, and that, during his public life, he restricted the preaching of the gospel to the boundaries of his own homeland. Yet, the disciples he chose, the baptism he instituted, his teachings and his commandments, all transcended national boundaries and reached out to touch peoples of every place and every nation. Today, as we approach the end of the 20th century, we can see this as an indisputable fact. In the process, however, Jesus brought upon himself many difficulties. He was not only not accepted by his fellow countrymen, but he was put to death in Jerusalem, his nation's capital. Luke records how he wept over his city and the



terrible fate that was to befall it. (Luke 19, 41) His tears arose from deep patriotic sentiments and from his having to accept the plan of his Father that the preaching of the gospel to the whole world would not wait upon its acceptance by his own people. Later, St. Paul would follow the same pattern, first preaching to his fellow Jews and then turning to the gentiles.<sup>5</sup>

### THE WORLD HIS NATION: THE HUMAN RACE HIS FAMILY

The tremendous internal change that transformed the particular patriotism of Jesus and his disciples into an acceptance of the universal world as "family", was to be achieved through a baptism of blood and fire: the blood of the cross and the fire of the Holy Spirit. The infant Church that was born from the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the infusion of Christ's Spirit, experienced a similar transformation in its members. Those who had once been gentiles now shared equal fellowship with Jesus' non-gentile disciples. (Ephesians 2: 12 & 19) Also, Christians saw themselves as having become citizens of the world as well as being citizens of their own countries.<sup>6</sup> With this came, too, the deep realization of themselves as a pilgrim people, who on this earth did not have a lasting dwelling place (Hebrews 13:14), but rather were in search of a future abode, a "better homeland, their heavenly homeland". (Hebrews 11: 14-16) As the Epistle to the Romans points out, this dual transformation is brought about by baptism in the Holy Spirit: "By baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendor of the Father, so also we might set our feet on the new path of life." (Romans 6:4)

With the onset of modern times, our country was plagued for over a hundred years by serious problems from within and oppression from without. Many of our patriots agonized over this situation and struggled to bring about China's restoration. One of them was Dr. Sun Yatsen, the Father of Modern China. Over sixty years ago, Dr. Sun, at the First National People's Congress formulated three important revolutionary policies: form links with Russia, tolerate the communists, and work for the welfare of peasants and workers. At the time, the nation was in an extremely precarious position. The major foreign powers were intent on carving up China while, at the same time, continuing to exploit her manpower, material, and natural resources to satisfy their own insatiable appetites. Internally, numerous warlords were on the rampage, and the people were plunged further into an abyss of misery and destitution. Our national Father was deeply moved by all this. He appealed to the whole world to support Chinese independence, to abrogate the unequal treaties,

and to allow China an equal place in the international community. That the foreign powers turned a deaf ear to his pleas and paid no heed to his call, was, indeed, a great pity. Only the newly established Soviet regime, having ulterior motives, responded by sending a few weapons to help support our revolutionary base in Guangdong. By aiding China the Soviets, who were then on the poorest terms with the other Western powers, were able to kill two birds with one stone. They could court favour with other oppressed peoples of the world while projecting an image of Russia as the only nation motivated by a sense of justice.<sup>7</sup> This is part of the historical background that led China to an eventual acceptance of socialism.

World history has seen many changes since then, and no one would deny that China today has achieved an equal footing with other world powers. For China to continue to harbour feelings of hatred for any nation, or, by the same token to replace, unwittingly, former feeling of inferiority with a false sense of superiority - seeking to upgrade one's own country by down-grading another's - is not only unnecessary but also unreasonable. In actuality, the revolutionary and historical world-view of Marxist-Leninism demands transcending national boundaries. Marx, himself, has said: "The workers have no fatherland."<sup>8</sup> He has also written: "A nation is the product of an unresolved class contradiction. The nation, too, is an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed classes." On another occasion he is quoted as saying: "Destroy this parasitic tumor of national authority! Extract it! Crush it! National authority has already become so much rubbish!" Lenin from the very beginning regarded national patriots as "chauvinists", "opportunists", and "betrayers of the proletariat" who should be eradicated.<sup>9</sup>

We Chinese have always emphasized the middle way - the proper balance between extremes. To say that "the workers have no fatherland" does not mean that workers have denied their affinity or severed their links with their ancestors, their home villages, and their nation. Even in times when the nation itself becomes the exploiter, a Chinese will continue to love his fatherland because he knows that to become stateless today is to live like a parasite in a world devoid of any security. Patriotism can sometimes become the cloak for opportunism; sometimes it can degenerate into a blind worship of the god of chauvinism, denying the international dimension of our human condition. But just as one does not have to deny one's own family to pay honour to one's nation, so, too, the acceptance of our universal family does not involve the rejection of our own country. This is what the Chinese mean by the "middle-way", and this is why in Chinese writing the character for "nation" ( 國 ) is al-

ways coupled with the Chinese character for "family" ( 家 ).

As Chinese Christians, it is not difficult for us to understand St. Paul's words to the Galatian community: "All baptised in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3, 27-28) This mentality and manner of speaking, this assertion of universal brotherhood and the equality of all men, this idea that "within the four seas all men are brothers", is part of our national heritage. These are not empty words or beautiful slogans, but concepts that are rich in content. One has only to pause and think of the four character inscription that is given a prominent place on all the statues in all the parks dedicated to the memory of Dr. Sun to realize that the phrase "All men are equal" belong to the deepest aspirations of our national Father, who was, indeed, a man for others. Recall, too, that for over twenty years the Da Tong Pian ( 大同篇 ): a Statement of Universal Community, was fixed to the wall of the United Nations building commemorating the contributions of Chinese culture to world culture. It is unfortunate that when the People's Republic was admitted in 1972, it was removed. Among the tributes to China's traditional teaching have been those paid by the Popes of the Catholic Church. Paul VI used the saying "Within the four seas all men are brothers" in an address, and the present Pope, John Paul II, has on numerous occasions publically expressed admiration for China's cultural tradition.

Recognition of the world as one's nation and the human race as one's family has a time and space dimension and is a way of understanding both. We have described the spacial dimension above, how Chinese culture and Christian faith have a close affinity. However, it is in the time dimension -- the present reaching towards eternity, this life building into the next -- that Christian faith offers culture a valuable component for exploring the full meaning of human existence. "If we do not know this world, how can we hope to know the next? This is a judgment of human destiny found not only in Chinese culture but in all cultures. The Scriptures, however, are careful to point out that "...there is no eternal city for us in this life but we look for one in the life to come." (Hebrews 13:14) Paul in his Letter to the Philippians states: "For us our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body." (Philippians 3: 20-21)

In the contemporary world, patriotism has a very particular mean-



ing. The nation is accepted as the basic political unit in international affairs. Nations are thus divided into large and small, strong and weak. A nation, in its turn, also exerts a certain pressure on its society, its families and individuals, often causing anxiety among its citizens because of an uncertainty about how to respond to its demands; how much is to be sacrificed for the nation's good?

Perhaps we may be able to find in a biblical perspective some norms or standards that will help to guide us through a middle course in our understanding of the nature of true patriotism. Not only is the Bible a book with a long history and an accurate textual criticism, it is also a book that has remained unchanged throughout the centuries, without losing any of its perennial popularity among its millions of readers. Most of all, it is for believers a book inspired by God, giving meaning and direction to the lives of all of us. Whenever the Church is confronted with a problem, it seeks a solution based on biblical understanding. With this book as our background, then, we offer here some conclusions on patriotism that might serve as a reference for those interested in a biblical analysis.

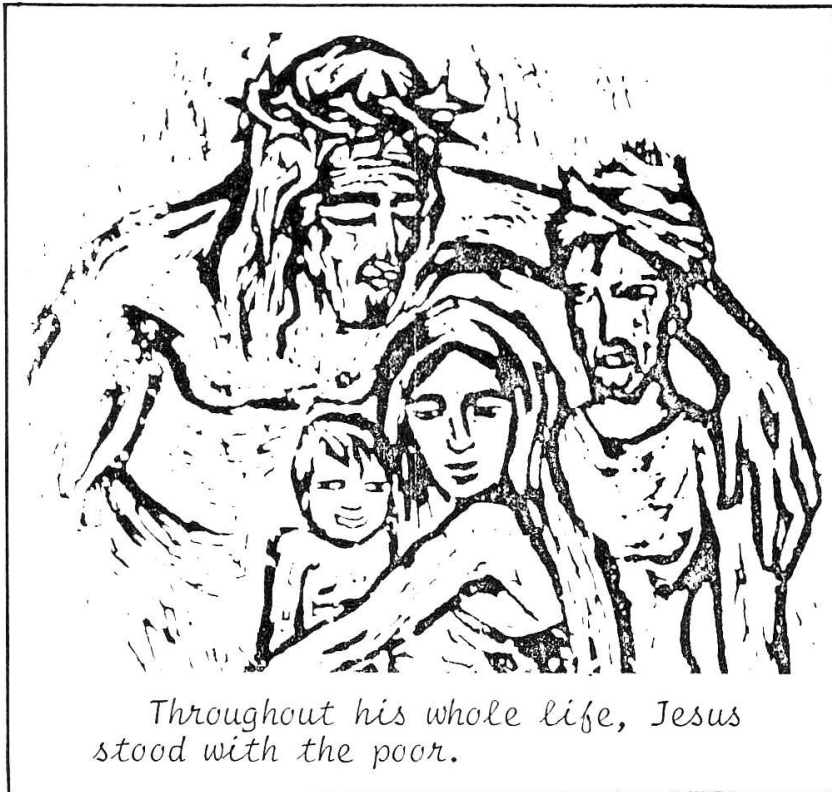
1. Patriotism is a duty and a right of every citizen. It is the duty of each one of us to protect and develop further the legacy that has been passed on to us by our ancestors. Love of country is also a right of every individual. It is not the exclusive possession of any one individual or institution. This right is not to be usurped by a particular ideology, institution or political party as its private reserve. Neither should ideological differences, nor non-participation in an institution or political party be labeled as unpatriotic activity. Nor should such individuals be deprived of enjoying their full patriotic rights on an equal footing with others.

Moreover, governments cannot use patriotism as a condition for forcing its citizens to go along with their every wish and accept their every policy. On many occasions, the prophets in the Old Testament rose up to challenge the authorities of their time on specific issues.

2. There is no conflict between loving one's country and loving other nations. Of course, there is a difference in manner of expression and practical activity that results from this love, but these seemingly different loves join together to form love's higher unity. Chinese Christians are conditioned by both their culture and their faith, and the love they bear for each, to readily accept the world as their nation and the human race as their family. It is part of the space and time

dimension of their culture that allows them to extend filial love to its ultimate boundaries, loving other nations as they love their own, treating others as they would wish to be treated in return. With modern technological advances, a citizen of one nation is now brought into instant communication with that of another. Such a situation demands that governments support the free flow of information and refrain from exerting excessive control over what is said and heard by its citizens. On their part, citizens should cultivate attitudes of openness, sincerely accepting the good intentions of others, learning to discern what is true from what is false, without presuming that every word from afar presents a danger to national interests, or that well-intentioned words or cordial invitations must have hidden twists of meaning.

3. Patriotism requires sacrifice. The greatest and most enduring kind of sacrifice lies not in the reform of others but in the reform of oneself. Each day one must mold a new self. Jesus transformed himself from the status of common citizen to become saviour of his people and saviour of the world through his crucifixion. Jesus is the Christian model of patriotism, and we, who call ourselves his disciples, must follow in his footsteps. In what manner? Let us listen to his own words: "If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; day after day he must take up his cross and come with me."



*Throughout his whole life, Jesus stood with the poor.*

(Luke 9, 23) Such teaching is hardly an opium to numb the poor. Jesus himself was poor. Throughout his whole life, he stood with the poor. He showed them great concern, always gave them sound advice, and never sought to numb them by his teachings. Nor was he a passive observer in his own society. He urged people to move forward, to take up the cross and enter into his work. He has preceded us, he is always walking before us. Our task is to follow him.

Finally, from the beginning of Christianity to

the present day, countless Christians have followed this way of patriotism. In the practice of loving one's country, Christians have never lagged behind. And there are two good reasons why this has always been so: first, Christians do not rely on themselves but draw their strength from the living Christ; second, they do not wait upon death to enter the kingdom of God, for this "heaven" has already begun for them in this world where peace, joy and harmony are in their hearts because God is with them. (Isaias 7: 14 and 8: 8-10)

(For FOOTNOTES see page 10)

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\* *PUBLICATION NOTICE* \*  
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*The first Chinese history of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong (香港天主教掌故) has just been published by the Holy Spirit Study Centre in conjunction with the Extramural Studies Office. Documenting the history of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong from its beginning in the 1840's to the present day, this 320-page paperback should prove to be a useful tool for researchers as well as providing interesting reading for the non-specialist. Priced at HK\$30.00 per copy with a 10% discount for the purchase of ten or more, the history can be ordered from the Holy Spirit Study Centre or the Extramural Studies Office, 6, Welfare Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong (Tel. 5-530141). For overseas orders: sea mail - US\$4.50; air mail - US\$6.50. Cheques or postal money orders are to be made out to "Holy Spirit Study Centre".*